

THE SECOND AMENDMENT

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try

HENRY CLAY HANSBROUGH

(39)



He was "vivified with a spark of her own soul."

THE
SECOND AMENDMENT

BY

HENRY CLAY HANSBROUGH



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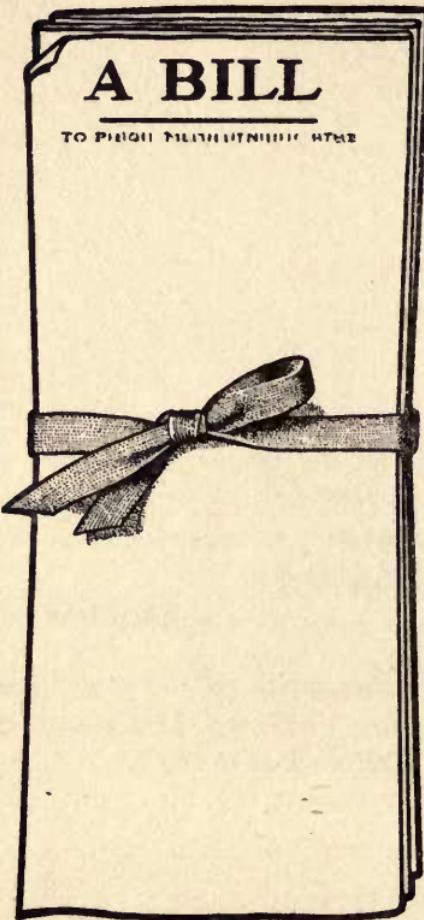
*Believe not each accusing tongue,
As most weak persons do ;
But still believe that story wrong
Which ought not to be true.*

—Sheridan.

There is an old proverb, also, which tells us that “Quackery has no friend like gullibility.” Montaigne declares “Nothing is so firmly believed as what we least know.”

A BILL

TO PROHIBIT MINTING OF STATE



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CHIEF CHARACTERS

*Scenes laid in Washington, New York, Chicago, St. Louis,
Mexico, the Blue Ridge region, and in a western state.*

Time—?

Senator CORNELIUS TWAIN; Senators FORDYCE, BRADY, BURRILL, BROOKE, Altrocrats.

Senators BAXTER, HALSEY, PAINE, PACKENHAM, KOPPINGER, WALLBRIDGE, Conservatives.

RALPH BOLSTON, a rare Briton.

ARTHUR GREY, Altrocratic editor.

PAGE BANNISTER, Altrocratic President.

NICHOLAS MIKLESKOFF, a titled Russian.

RICHARD BOSTWICK, chief of detectives.

ANDREW HOLT, millionaire manufacturer.

STEPHEN HOLT, ardent and erratic youth.

ADELBERT ROBERTS, adviser of troubled consolidators.

EPHRAIM FOX, the Come Quick Danger's attorney.

SAM IVES, WILLIAM GIDDINGS, ANDY AKERS, lobbyists.

CHIEF CHARACTERS

JOHN NOGGINS, *sea captain.*

DON JOSE GUERRERO, *village alcalde.*

ENID GREY, *Twain's sweetheart.*

MARTHA GIDDINGS, *victim of politics and perfidy.*

MARGARET HOLT, *sunny natured and wealthy.*

JUANITA GUERRERO, *in love with Bolston.*

MRS. HOLT, *practical woman and generous.*

MRS. GREY, *Enid's mother.*

SUSIE NOGGINS, *the sea captain's little daughter.*

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CHAPTER I

THE RETURNED TRAVELER

When the steamer came within land view one of the Japanese passengers remarked that the Americans were "flying very large kites." Several airships were skimming the ragged edges of the mountain range beyond the Straits of Fuca. The Jap was the first to see them; he was industriously using a pair of marine glasses. An hour later the airships were plainly visible to the naked eye. It was my first sight of a flying machine, for when I sailed for the Orient the Wright brothers had not made their demonstrations of the aeroplane at Ft. Meyer, Virginia, and the first Zeppelin dirigible was just being constructed in Germany.

Nor had the wireless telegraph been put into practical service. Automobiles were not out of the experimental stage as yet, and the tallest skyscraper in New York did not exceed twenty-eight stories. Still, this last achievement was thought to be very great. And yet, in the midst of so many wonderful evidences of man's inventive genius and constructive skill, the eager, rushing, palpitating multitude had quite forgotten about the telephone, the most marvelous of all of them—a contrivance, indeed, which even Edison had been unable to explain or to understand fully; for who among all the scientists and discoverers can accurately account for the mysterious workings of an instrument that conveys the human voice a thousand

miles in less than the hundredth part of a second and returns the answer before the questioner's lips have closed?

In the domain of politics a single individual had long been in control of the Democratic party, which was fast going to wreck on the rocks of artificial prosperity that the Republicans had erected out of the selfishness of man. But this was in consonance with the industrial expediency of the day. Insurgency was then in embryo, and the wild beasts of the African jungle had not yet been laid under political tribute.

Wherever I traveled in the Far East I was deeply impressed, not to say sorely depressed, by the slothful customs and other evidences of decay to be seen on every hand. Even the new buildings, the few that fell under my eye, and the young people as well, were old in outward appearance; the dust of the dead ages seemed to have settled permanently upon everything, and soon I came to feel that I, too, was aging under the predominant influence of the pervading "sere and yellow leaf."

Very naturally, after a considerable period in a reactionary atmosphere, the perspective faculty is dulled, and one is prone to relapse into an unprogressive state of mind. Such was my mental condition when I embarked at Yokohama, I and my baggage ticketed and checked for America, my battered trunks and out-of-date bags profusely plastered with the quaint labels of oriental hotels.

But what a change was here, my countrymen! The first object that aroused my dormant enthusiasm was a fresh, crisp copy of a newspaper published daily on shipboard. It was called "*The Morning Vibram*," for the reason, I presume, that it was devoted chiefly to the reproduction of wireless dispatches from all civilized parts of the globe. One of these messages of the air, bearing a Washington date line, told of the concluding negotiations between Great Britain and the United States whereby Canada was becoming a political part of the

American Union in exchange for the Philippine Islands, annexation by the corporation or reciprocity route having failed. Another announced the completion of the new sea-level canal across the Isthmus of Panama. This was in consequence of the mysterious and wanton destruction of the Gatun Dam in the old lock canal. A "Vibrogram" editorial on the subject referred scathingly to the part that some Japanese fanatics were believed by many Americans to have played in the Dam incident. However, the story was not officially credited in the United States. The editorial concluded: "Thus has a great national crime been avenged by a stroke of diplomacy which rids us of one alien people, not of our blood, in exchange for one that belongs to the common stock from which we sprang. Thus is the ambitious and aggressive Mikado brought to face a reinforced, if not a belligerent power in the East. And hereafter our own navy may pass from the Atlantic to the Pacific without being obliged to negotiate the top of a mountain."

It was from the patriotic editor of "The Vibrogram," Arthur Grey, who was on board, that I acquired much valuable information in regard to America and some important events occurring during my absence. He was also the owner and publisher of "The Morning Record," the leading daily paper at the National Capital. Grey, then a young man, was just entering the journalistic field in Washington at the beginning of my public service. He knew American politics and politicians, and had a wide reputation for rare wisdom as well as for impeccable honesty. Among other things, he was famous for having followed strictly and consistently the policy of "editing his newspapers upstairs instead of in the counting room."

Grey, it should be said, was not a believer in things utopian; nor was he an advocate of fads. He knew the weak spots in politicians and in new party movements, and had refrained from lending unlimited encouragement to Insurgency and its

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corner stone in the temple of political issues—the primary election system. He had great respect for the courts, and yet it was difficult for him to conceal his disgust for those tribunals that had upheld the constitutionality of that provision in most of the primary laws under which certain state legislatures had been weak enough to delegate to the state-wide electorate the legislative duty of choosing United States senators—for that is the net result of all such statutes. He did not believe in widespread distribution of responsibility.

He also knew the people, although in the abstract he did not distrust them. The people were all right, he declared, if they had the good fortune not to be misled. According to his view they were in as great danger of being deceived by one faction as by another, or by one party as by another.

"And they seem to like it, too," said he.

So, from the very beginning of the agitation against corporate domination in politics, and throughout the reign of Populism, Insurgency and the like, his exceptional foresightedness enabled him to see that nothing was to be gained by temporizing or compromising as between party factions; that if the times were out of joint—and he had some misgivings on this score—there must be a complete regeneration in public policy. If a new party was needed it must stand for something on its own account, not for its service to monopoly, and have a ringing title that meant literally what it implied. It must have a paramount issue that was not galvanized with antiquated "principles" worn to a frazzle by either or both of the parties which the new one was designed to supersede.

"A three-ringed circus," said he, "may be just the thing, but you can't have a three-ringed political party; nor do I believe in political side shows. In politics there is always the danger that the clamoring 'outs,' when they get into power, should this hap-

pen, will fall into the same undesirable ways the 'ins' had been pursuing."

Then he went on to explain the reason for the Altrocratic party; told me of the struggle its founders were undergoing and that might be expected to continue, and gave me an interesting account of its aims and purposes, analyzing the great Purchase bill that embraced the issue upon which the new party based its hopes of permanent success. Thus it was that I became familiar with the course of legislation and with administrative policy as these had progressed while I was away from my native land.

Little did either of us imagine, as we discussed matters together on shipboard, what was in store for the greater Republic in consequence of pending policies; the nature of the startling events so soon to take place at the very seat of government. Scarcely can I realize, even now, what has happened, it is all so very strange, although it is entirely plausible. I know, however, that Arthur Grey, at the time I began this story, was a changed man—broken in health and sad at heart; yet he had not lost his iron nerve; men of his type never wholly despair of the future of their country, however much they may be displeased with the trend of politics, or the seeming madnesses in what constitutes modern popular government.

So deeply engrossed were we over the stirring prospects and the uncertainties of affairs of state and domestic development—with the Canadian country and the frozen north coming into the Union under the Stars and Stripes, and all Europe, encouraged by our abandonment of the policy of protection for the domestic farmer, demanding free trade, and with it an unfortified canal—it was not until after our Jap friend with the marine glasses had discovered the flying machines and we were steaming into Seattle harbor, that I found time to inquire particularly after Grey's interesting little family at their home in Washington City.

"Ah, you have not forgotten them," he exclaimed, proudly, when I spoke of Mrs. Grey and her many courtesies toward me during my public service. And his face beamed with a smile of delight when I referred particularly to the budding little maid that had so often stood at my knee and interrogated me concerning "the big talking men in the big Capitol on the hill." Then, in a confidential tone, he said :

"Enid is soon to be married."

I found it difficult to persuade myself that she could have grown to the marriageable age, and yet, of course, several years were passed since I had listened to her joyous, naïve questionings. I was silent for quite a while, running over in my mind the strange things that come on the wings of time. Then I inquired :

"May I ask to whom?"

"To a brother senator of yours," he replied, laughingly.

"A nephew senator, more likely, Grey; my brother senators are surely all dead, or have been defeated for re-election, by this time."

Still, I congratulated him. Knowing the Senate as I had, I felt that his daughter could scarcely make a mistake by choosing a senator for a husband, notwithstanding the proclivity of the scarlet press to satirize them and to create disagreeable impressions concerning their gentlemanly qualities and honorable purposes; for, while I am aware that not all the senators that have helped to make our remarkable history have been faultless, I am equally certain that not in all history has there ever been a body that contained so few unworthy men. If we accept current criticism as being true, it is a body whose members are expected to be something more than human. Yet, in truth, where a few senators have failed to meet this expectation, may it not have been due largely to the falsehoods and the nagging tactics of ambitious, envious party rivals outside the Senate—of those that

are bent on getting into the Senate at any price to themselves or at any cost in reputation to the incumbent?—to the unfortunate habit, forsooth, in this “land of the free and home of the brave,” of discrediting public servants, particularly those who attain to distinguished positions and assume grave responsibilities? And how often the attack from the outside begins even before the victims have had an opportunity to demonstrate their fitness. It seems to be a national trait to undermine those in authority; to drive men—great or small, good or bad—from place and from power. Only angels with wings—large and strong ones—could be equal to eluding a persistent, heartless pursuit like this.

My interest in the Senate had not waned. Although I was looking forward with no small degree of pleasure to the time when convenience would permit me to visit the place of some of the greatest trials as well as the greatest triumphs of my life, after listening to Grey's energetic and hopeful words concerning political conditions, I resolved to go to Washington after as little delay as possible. Nor would my first call be at the Capitol; immediately on my arrival I would pay my respects at the editor's home. I was curious to see the future wife of my “brother senator.” I had known the one as a child, but not until my friend, the distinguished father of the girl, spoke his name had I ever heard of Cornelius Twain.

The true American quickly adjusts himself to marvelous things. I was by no means slow in getting accustomed to the high-speeding automobiles that thronged the highways.

“It is in the state of Washington,” remarked Grey, before we left Seattle, “that more good roads are to be found than in any other commonwealth. This is due chiefly to the efforts of my energetic friend, Samuel Dale, who enjoys being called a good roads crank. Where you find good roads there also will you find the autochime in abundance.”

Nor did I “duck” or “side-step,” after a few days’ experience,

in order to avoid the airships when they came swooping down for passengers or gasoline. And, as for being surprised at the height of the skyscrapers, the sixty-story one at Seattle certainly prepared my mind against anything of the kind that might be seen when I came to New York.

There was no doubt but that by this time I was coming out of the spell that oriental travel had put upon me; that I had shaken off the dust of the dead ages, and was once more hopefully and buoyantly American in substance and in spirit.

Another thing, one that pleased me much, the places known as the Twin Cities—now one and inseparable, in spite of themselves—had finished the work of putting their street car tracks under ground, particularly in the congested centers. What a relief! On this account I lingered in the consolidated metropolis, now one of the beauty spots of earth, for nearly a week beyond my limit, so that I might enjoy the absence of noise.

I did not observe any great improvement in this regard in Chicago; but no one ever goes to Chicago expecting to find quiet and rest, or anything else that does not appear to be overgrown, including noise.

Coming to Washington from New York in an airship (time two hours), I was soon comfortably settled at the Hotel Willington, famous for its great court, its superior food and its fancy prices. Grey was on hand with his "autochine" and whirled me through Rock Creek Park to his comfortable residence in the hills. It was here that I passed my first evening in many years at the Capital; that I again met "little Enid." She smiled and shook her head when I thus greeted her.

"American girls develop rapidly, once they begin to grow," said she, with a musical laugh.

Rarely has it ever been my good fortune to meet one possessing such superlative beauty and charm. Surely the Graces had delved lovingly here. It was a beauty that appealed to all the

senses, making its intellectual appeal as well ; for even the shapeliness of form and the fine pink coloring of her striking Grecian face seemed to fade from view when she spoke—a voice, indeed, so sweetly and mellifluously attuned that no words of mine can describe it ; and her wonderful gray eyes were all alike with incomparable expressiveness.

"I am sure you will like him," she replied when I had offered my felicitations. And how easily she was drawn into enthusiastic praise of his admirable qualities. So, as I listened and looked, almost dumbfounded in the effulgent glory of her presence, I determined to go the next morning to the Senate chamber that I might see and know the wonderful, the fortunate man who could capture this womanly prize.

But who, I asked myself when the body had been called to order, are these strange men? Were they senators? It must be so. Yet they were so unlike the old guard in appearance and manner. Could it be that the primary system had wrought the change? Then I recalled a flippant but forceful gibe I had heard when the primary was first coming into vogue: "The veriest nondescript may run for the Senate when that fad becomes effective, and at the finish the wealthiest and perhaps the least competent man will take the prize, while not ten per cent of the voters will have known beforehand any of the aspirants that took part in the scramble."

There was much truth in this sarcastic quip. But many of us have learned from sore experience that truth and party expediency are not usually on intimate terms ; wisdom and ragtime politics, like oil and water, do not mix.

Yes, the change was very marked, and it was quite complete. There were none with whom I had served—no "brother senators," to use the editor's phrase ; so I consoled myself with the thought that at least there was no harm in accepting them as nephews.

I asked an attendant to point out Senator Twain, but he was not in his seat ; had not been there that day. The reason for his absence was not hard to guess, for although, in my day as a member of the body, there was a tradition that love was not conducive to serious-minded statesmanship, I had known senators to steal away from the dreary scene and drive in the parks with fair ladies. Nor time nor changed political conditions and policies would overcome this pleasing practice, against which the sage of "Wolfert's Roost" had inveighed as a frivolous habit.

CHAPTER II

AN UNRECORDED VOTE

I lingered about the chamber, hoping that Twain might come in, without the least suggestion or suspicion in my mind that the day was to be a memorable one in the annals of my country. I had spent the greater part of the afternoon in the seat of another absent senator, and was not following closely the sleepy proceedings—for they were of the dull, perfunctory, indefinite sort that belong to listless legislation—when my attention was attracted by the noise of an unusual silence, as an epigrammatist might say. In other words, there was a noticeable hiatus in the speechmaking. All eyes were now focused on Mr. Packenham, Conservative senator from Lower Alaska, who occupied the floor. The Seward peninsula had but just been admitted to the sisterhood of states, adding two stars to the blue field of “Old Glory.”

Sixty seconds of complete silence in the Senate will arouse greater curiosity and interest than a whole month of routine noise. Such was the last minute consumed by Packenham before he yielded the floor. He had stopped abruptly in his dry, dispassionate speech, and taken a slip of folded paper brought to him just then by a page. With his other hand he lifted a glass of water to his lips, and, while he sipped sparingly of the contents of the glass, by a dexterous movement of his thumb and forefinger he unfolded the paper.

"You do not look well. Your argument conclusive."

These were the words in the note. They had been typewritten, as was shown by subsequent investigation, and the word "conclusive" was heavily underlined. The page said the message came at the request of a gentleman in the reserved gallery.

The senator was much paler now than before. He crushed the slip of paper in his hand, rolled it into a small round ball, dropped it into a waste basket and then returned the glass to its place on his desk. After a furtive glance about the dull, prosaic scene, he said :

"Mr. President, I will not further impose my views upon the patience of the Senate. I have done."

Most of the senators that were in the chamber looked surprised when Packenham suddenly ceased speaking and sat down, for, as I afterward learned, he was expected to talk at least two days ; he usually did when great constitutional questions were being considered. On this occasion he had spoken less than two hours ; and, too, he had closed his argument without indulging in any oratorical flourish whatsoever.

"Surely," remarked a new senator near me, "this is not the same Packenham to whom so many gallery visitors have listened in the past."

The look of surprise on senators' faces gave way to one of astonishment when the Vice President, standing in his place, asked if there were further remarks on the pending bill, and no senator rose to speak. The Vice President's inquiry was not only superfluous and unnecessary—it was unusual. It was evident that he deemed it necessary to proceed cautiously and deliberately, for the reason, presumably, that the whole country was facing a most uncommon situation. Everyone knew the two parties were so evenly divided in the Senate that a single vote might easily determine the fate of the bill then under consideration.

"Vote! Vote!"

This demand came from senators on both sides of the chamber.

For weeks, to the exclusion of nearly all other business, debate had proceeded upon the great Purchase bill, with no prospect of a vote being taken; both the Altrocratic and the Conservative senators were fearful of the result. Repeated attempts had been made, first by the proponents and then by the opponents, whenever the conditions seemed favorable to either side, to secure unanimous consent for a time to vote. These attempts invariably failed; for it always happened that some senator on the other side objected. Then the debate would go on.

Until the sudden turn came, when Packenham stopped talking, it looked as if the end of the long session of Congress might be reached without definite action. Grey told me, as we came eastward, that he expected such a result. Yet, at no time in the history of the Senate had a great national question been disposed of without a previous unanimous agreement—that is to say, an agreement on a definite time for a vote on the measure in which the fate of that question was involved.

So, having no doubt in regard to the duty of the presiding officer when debate comes to an end in the Senate (which rarely happens), and being reassured by Senator Fordyce, the Altrocratic leader, who, from his place on the floor, was now nodding his approval—the Vice President, in a voice full of confidence, exclaimed:

"The question is on the amendment to the pending bill."

"Which amendment, Mr. President?" This inquiry came from several senators in unison; there were many amendments.

After considerable parliamentary sparring it was agreed that a vote should be taken on an amendment that had been offered during the morning hour by Fordyce.

This pleased the Altrocratic senators, who were already evinc-

ing great delight, for they were glad that debate was at an end. And, too, they had no doubt of a majority of one on any test of party strength that might occur.

Yet, they found it difficult to conceal their uneasiness, for the Conservatives, who were expected to continue the debate indefinitely, were now bestirring themselves for the important contest at hand. By this time it seemed as if every Conservative senator was present and in his seat. They were noted for their disciplinary methods.

"Behold the sereness and composedness, the hopeful light in Baxter's face," remarked Senator Paine. He was speaking in an undertone to Senator Halsey, a fellow Conservative, who showed by his manner that he was nervously apprehensive.

"One never knows what a smiling man is thinking about," replied Halsey. "See! Fordyce, too, is smiling broadly. He looks too happy to suit me."

Indeed, both party leaders seemed to be pleased.

"Well, why not have it out now?" said Paine. "If we defeat them that will end it for the present. If they succeed, the courts will settle the question as it should be settled, for the bill is unconstitutional."

"Undoubtedly," replied Halsey.

"Yea^s and nay^s, Mr. President," came in chorus from the senators.

Accordingly, the yeas and nays were ordered, amidst a scene of confusion and excitement such as had never before occurred on the floor of the Senate. Fortunate, indeed, was I to be present and witness this culminating point in a momentous issue.

The sonorous ring of the bells, signifying that a vote was at hand, sounded ominously, imparting a metallic quality to the depressing heat. Pages raced through the building in search of absent senators. The galleries soon filled with spectators, who

were dawdling in the corridors and lobbies, hopeful that something of an exciting nature would take place on the floor, while in the reserved stalls were gathered many consolidators and their obedient chamberlains, who for months had infested the place of legislative power with their artful and insinuating presence. Even the Master Monger was there. At no time since the period of "regulation and control," now obsolete, had their number at the Capitol been so great. Was it the beginning of the end of their reign of lawlessness? If so, the fact that it was at hand did not seem to penetrate their calloused souls.

In the telephone booths the "whips" of the two parties were contending for the wires, which appeared now to be vexatiously crossed or shortcircuited. Senator Brady, the Altrocratic whip, was especially interested in reaching Senator Twain. Something seemed to be wrong with everything just then. Finally, when Brady succeeded in getting the wire and also the information that it was "busy," his remarks, if I dared record them as uttered, would be worthy of a place among the profane classics as a model of succinct and forceful epigram.

"Damn these minions of money!" he exclaimed. "They thwart us at every step." But this is only a sample, and was not all that he said.

Impatiently returning the receiver to its bracket, he hastened to the office of the Sergeant-at-Arms, where he wrote a list of Altrocratic senators who were absent, yet who were known to be in the city, and directed that messengers be dispatched for them forthwith. Then he rushed into the Senate chamber just in time to answer to his name on the vote on the first amendment.

The result of the roll call, after the regular and the temporary pairs had been announced, showed forty senators for the amendment and forty against it, with one senator absent unpaired, there being none with whom he could be paired. The absentee was Senator Twain.

"The chair votes no," said the Vice President in a tone that was scarcely audible. "The amendment is rejected."

A wave of unrestrained glee passed over the faces of those in the reserved stalls. In the other galleries, where sat the proletarian visitors, a serious and portentous silence ensued.

Fordyce then took the floor. He made the assertion, and made it vigorously, that there had been no previous agreement to take a vote. It was a strange proceeding at best, he declared. Therefore, he made a motion for a recess of thirty minutes.

There was no doubt that his party followers, who were now in a state bordering upon consternation, needed time in which to collect their faculties and their forces.

"I hope the motion will be voted down," replied Baxter, the Conservative leader. "The friends of the amendment knew how to prevent a vote; they could have gone on with the debate, as they have been doing for months."

The Conservatives were anxious to proceed, for with the casting vote of the Vice President in their favor, Twain being away and unpaired, they knew they could now defeat the Purchase bill.

"We did not anticipate any sharp practice," responded Fordyce with a ringing note in his voice. "It was a case of snap judgment, nothing less. Senators on the other side will do well not to push me to the proof."

Packenham's face colored. Baxter was about to reply, when Senator Wallbridge, one of the senior statesmen—a Conservative in fact, for he believed in proper senatorial ethics—rose and said he hoped, in view of what had occurred, the request for a recess would be acceded to. And it was, for Baxter knew the value of party solidarity. He also knew of Wallbridge's tendency toward independent action.

"That was the shortest speech Packenham ever made," Brady exclaimed when the Altrocratic leaders gathered at the rear of

the chamber after the recess was announced. Brady was speaking under suppressed excitement. He realized that his colleagues were not pleased with him; "Twain should have been here," they growled. But what "whip" ever knew where all his fellow partisans were when needed?

"And everyone on our side expected Packenham to make one of his long speeches," added Burrill.

"Oh! he was wound up to run until he got a sign to quit," declared Fordyce, impatiently. "It is all clear enough now, after the damage is done. Where is Twain?"

"I have a man at the 'phone trying to locate him," replied Brady, "and have sent a messenger to Mr. Grey's house."

"A senator can't be in love and attend to his public duties too," added Fordyce, scornfully. Tradition always and forever in the Senate!

It was near the hour of six when the Senate reconvened. By this time the galleries, emptied in consequence of the recess, were again filling up. There were now many members of the House on the floor. Excitement over the unexpected developments was running high outside as well as inside the chamber. All kinds of sensational reports were afloat. In the street there was a wild rumor that the Purchase bill had been defeated; that Packenham was ill, being obliged to suspend his speech; that Senator Twain was absent when the vote was taken, and that his friends were gravely suspicious of him. Yet street rumors are not always reliable. The most composed and confident persons to be seen were the Conservative senators and the occupants of the reserved stalls who agreed with them that the pending Altrocratic measure was both vicious and unwarranted.

Senator Brooke took the floor to debate the second amendment. The confusion was so great that the reporters of debates could not hear him; the Conservative senators did not want to hear him, and the Altrocratic senators were interested only in con-

suming time so as to admit of the return of Twain. So that Brooke was in no haste to proceed, and when he did proceed his deliberate and somewhat irrelevant remarks were not listened to; nor did he nor any other Altrocrat care whether they were or not.

After two hours of argument Brooke yielded for a motion to adjourn. It was defeated. Then he went on—like the Brooke that he was.

It was the Conservatives who prevented an adjournment an hour ago. Baxter now came forward with a proposal that he would agree to an adjournment if the Altrocrats would stop talking and permit a vote on the second amendment. It was Baxter's amendment. The Altrocrats declared that it would nullify the Purchase law, should it become a law with the amendment in it. Still, they knew that under the rule they could have the vote reconsidered, even within the next two days, with Twain present; so they accepted Baxter's proposal to take a vote on his amendment and then adjourn.

Although it was now considerably past the usual dinner hour, the Altrocrats clung to the hope that Twain might yet appear.

Before the above-mentioned arrangement was suggested by Baxter and acceded to by Fordyce, the party machinery in the Senate had been put in motion. Over against the west wall of the chamber, near the main entrance, stood a watchful employé of the body. He owed his appointment to the Conservatives. Just outside the door near him a page was stationed. Far down at the end of the corridor was another page, and near the street entrance of the building still another. This line of watchers had been thus picketed, while Brooke was speaking, so that the Conservatives could be apprised of the arrival of Twain. Had the latter appeared at the street entrance at this critical moment, word would have been quickly passed, and before Twain could enter the cloak room, put his hat in his locker and come into

the chamber, the Conservatives would have time to secure an adjournment for the day, thus, perhaps, saving the immediate defeat of Baxter's amendment.

"Whip" Brady had his lookouts also. There was one at the north window of the general reception room, another at the entrance to the marble room and still another just inside the northeast door of the chamber. Brady had no doubt that Twain would approach the Capitol, if he came at all, from a certain direction, so that Fordyce would get the signal from the inside watcher as soon as the latter got it from those outside. Then Fordyce would have Brooke stop talking, and permit a vote to be taken on the second amendment. There was also an Altrocratic messenger at the Grey residence and one at Twain's lodgings, both under instructions to use the telephone, if possible, in case the senator came to either of those places.

All these arrangements and precautions, quite unusual it is true, were entirely legitimate. They seemed to be necessary, under the peculiar conditions then confronting the Senate, in determining the fate of the most important party measure that had come before the body in a half century. In all fairness to the Conservatives, it may be said that they were not aware—and certainly the Altrocrats were not—of another, a more mysterious and diabolical scheme, concocted outside the chamber, to overcome the vote of Twain.

In the heated discussions over the extraordinary events now stirring the people as never before, no one ever directly charged the Conservative leader with a knowledge of what was about to happen, although there were vague hints to that effect. Had the accusation ever been specifically made, it is not at all likely that Baxter would have denied it; he never denied anything—only smiled. To have wasted time in making denials would have kept him or any other party leader very busy.

"Mr. Baxter." (The clerk was now calling the roll, in accordance with the agreement to have a vote.)

"Ay," answered the Conservative leader, whose name was at the top of the list.

Its being there was a mere coincidence; alphabetically it belonged there. Baxter's political leadership, which was something entirely apart from the tally-sheet arrangement, was largely in consequence of his ability, his courage, or, more properly, his admirable audacity. And, too, it was supposed he represented the swollen fortunes of the country; so at least it was currently reported. From this distinction he never shrank for a moment. Withal, he was believed to consider it an honor and a duty. The multitude understood it, and censured him. Baxter merely smiled.

It was Baxter's smile that gave no inconsiderable weight to his name being at the top of the roll—that and his undaunted leadership. If a Conservative senator happened not to hear Baxter's "aye" or "no," thus being in doubt as to what he was expected to do, he had but to look at his leader's face. If Baxter was smiling, that meant that all Conservatives were expected to vote in the affirmative; if he wore a serious expression, this fact implied the negative. It sometimes happened that Conservatives would vote "no" when Baxter had voted the other way; whereupon the latter would smilingly remark in an undertone, "Our vote's aye."

The term "our," as thus used, had its deeper significance—a sort of community-of-interest meaning, which is a corporate quality. In the Senate this powerful thing has a potency, and it is not to be either despised or ignored. All parties have used it, and their successors will doubtless do so. Its fruit is party prestige, which is extended to the states, in the form of patronage, about election time. It had long been relied upon and enjoyed by the industrial and other mendicants of consolidation,

and was now being successfully used to put the brand of party treason upon those who were even suspected of independent political tendencies.

And as I sat there while the roll was being called on a measure that deeply concerned the welfare of a hundred millions of people and their unborn descendants, on the one hand, and a hundred thousand monopolists and their heirs on the other, I was wondering just how far back it was in the faded ages that the spirit of monopoly—that is, the struggle for individual advantage—had its inception. It must have been long before the advent of the jack-knife, hopeful youth's implement of barter and trade, before kites were invented, before spinning tops were made. It may be that it was about the time that mankind was first studying the fashions in animal skins; when Eve's daughters, "garmented in light from their own beauty," wearied of the monotony of prevailing styles, were thatching themselves with grasses from the Aryan plains.

Our earliest ancestors levied tribute upon one another in a variety of ways. If one of them had anything that another one wanted, the process by which the title passed between them was very simple, and the late owner was left to sit on a limb and chatter about his hard luck. The multitude sympathized with the vanquished and yet paid obsequious homage to the victor. Hence the modern proverb that "nothing succeeds like success." Later, when mind had risen superior to matter, effective results were obtained by negotiation, brute force being used only as a last resort. But now, at the high noon of our "civilizing power," we had combined the potential forces of greed, and pasted the label of "party" on the consolidated product, "with naught set down in malice," but with gain as the controlling motive. Spoliation was come to be an exact science—an art in legislation and a virtue in business pursuits.

Prosperity and monopoly were now accepted by many estima-

ble persons as synonymous terms. What the Altrocrats were insisting upon was that the two should not be confused, because of the dissimilitude in their meaning; for, as they contend, in the success of the one reposes the hope of the people, in the other the certain destruction of the Republic—all which has a musical sound that will fall flat on the ear of selfishness. The line of political division was well defined in the Senate, with the Conservatives representing the underwritten policies of artifice and privilege, the hopeful Altrocrats struggling militantly to establish a real, honest democracy.

However, these matters cannot now be discussed at length—not while the roll is being called. I may not discuss them at all, having not the slightest desire to infringe upon the prerogative of the sensationalist.

"Mr. Brady," continued the clerk.

"No," responded the Altrocratic "whip."

Just then a page bounded up the aisle to Brady's seat. The senator listened intently to the youth's whispered message. After a moment's reflection he rose and walked carelessly over to where Fordyce was sitting.

"When the first pair is announced," said he in an undertone, "get up and make a disturbance about it. Delay the roll call even at the risk of your life. Twain is on his way in an auto, an aero, or something; they have just 'phoned me from Grey's."

The opportunity for the "disturbance" came the next minute, when the name of a Conservative absentee was called, and an Altrocratic senator who had a regular pair with the absentee proposed to transfer it to Twain. Although this arrangement would have been quite in accordance with everyday usage, strangely enough Halsey raised an objection, and supported it by a short argument. He asked why the pair arrangement on the vote taken on the first amendment was not the preferable one, and far less complicating.

He feared that a rearrangement might leave a Conservative senator unpaired, thus imperiling the second amendment.

His objection to the proposed pairing of Twain gave Fordyce the opportunity he sought to make a "disturbance," and he embraced it. Under the unwritten rule of unlimited debate, Fordyce, if he chose, could talk until Twain appeared upon the scene, be that the next minute or the next month. Then of course Brady would give him a sign to stop.

But Twain did not arrive. And what is stranger still—a thing until then unprecedented in the Senate—the vote on the second amendment to the great Purchase bill, the roll having been called, had not been announced by the presiding officer when the body adjourned that night.

CHAPTER III

WOMAN'S PRESCIENCE

When the first rays of the morning dawn came creeping through the blinded windows of her dainty apartment, Enid Grey was reminded that she had not slept.

Here, in seclusion and unutterable sorrow, her wonderful eyes aflame and swollen with grief, her aching bosom surging against a great weight of anguish, she was pacing the awful moments away, waiting, hoping, silently praying for a message from her father or from Mr. Bolston—anything that would lift the terrible cloud of despair from her anxious mind.

The very silence of her surroundings was oppressive, while the least of noises assumed the magnitude of thunderbolts. The incessant ticks of the clock, from its cozy recess on the mantel, sank into her exquisite senses as thrusts from trenchant blades. Yet, there was something in the resonant peals of the mellow bell, as it solemnly marked the dragging hours, answering the music of the reverberant chimes in the distant steeple, that aroused activity and exalted the emotions; she knew by the last strokes of the little timepiece and the growing light in the windows that a new day had come. Would it bring relief? Could the angels in Heaven prevail against such injustice?

Weary in body and mind, she yielded to the entreaties of her faithful maid and lay down on the divan. Here Aimée soothed her into fitful slumber.

At "The Morning Record" building the editor, Senator Brady, and Ralph Bolston, far beyond the midnight, discussed the strange events of the preceding evening and received the vague, indefinite accounts and rumors brought in by the tired reporters. Speculation at police headquarters was equally dubious.

As a result of their efforts to unravel the mystery, Brady, Grey and Bolston consoled themselves with the thought that there was nothing tragically remarkable about what might turn out to be only an unavoidable delay. Twain's failure to return to the autocar in which he had set out for the Senate; the probability that he, being engrossed in the business that took him into the Willington to meet his friend Splicer, had neglected or even forgotten to send word to Enid, who was waiting for him in the machine, and that, before he had finished with Splicer, she, becoming alarmed or being moved by the impatience of hunger, had wheeled away—any or all of these could easily have happened. Again, he might have heard of the adjournment of the Senate, and, his presence not being required there, decided to go with Splicer to his room.

Strange it was, nevertheless, that he failed to send word to her as she waited outside, or to use the 'phone and advise the much interested occupants of the Grey household of the cause of his delay; it was not at all like Twain to permit even the most pressing public duties to interfere with the commonplace civilities of life. Moreover, Bolston's industrious efforts during the evening to locate Splicer availed him not; indeed, no one could be found that knew of his being in the city.

Woman's prescience is so much keener than is this same power in man that she has frequently been misjudged. She has been known to foresee and to foretell the coming of great calamities without giving a logical reason therefor. This remarkable faculty was strong in Enid Grey.

To this day she cannot account for the controlling motive that impelled her to insist upon driving with Cornelius Twain to the Capitol when they returned from their airing in the park, and Twain was advised by the waiting messenger sent by Brady that the Senate was voting on the Purchase bill.

Nor will she undertake to describe the prompting apprehensions that came to her when, as the chauffeur was cranking the machine—the Brady messenger having hastened away—another messenger appeared, saying that Mr. Splicer had urgently requested the senator to stop at the Willington on his way; that Splicer would wait for him near the buffet that opens on the great court near the fountain and would accompany him to the Senate.

"At the Willington, did you say?" she asked the last messenger.

"Yes, miss." He lifted his hat politely.

"And he is now waiting near the buffet?"

"Yes, miss," the young man again touching his hat.

"Thank you," exclaimed Twain. "I was not aware Splicer was to be here," he added as the driver threw on the first clutch and "honked" for right of way, for he had been told to test the speed limit. "Something important, I am sure, or Bob would have put it off until tomorrow." Splicer was one of his closest friends, the editor of a leading paper in his state.

"You will pardon me, won't you?" she asked, laughingly. "It is my foolish anxiety that prompts me."

"Your interest always pleases me," he replied.

"Will you have time?" she inquired, in a dubious tone.

"Oh, yes. It will take only a minute. Besides, calling the roll in the Senate is slow work, and there will be so many preliminaries to a vote it is doubtful if I shall be needed tonight."

"Do you know the messenger?" she inquired.

"The first one, yes ; the other one—well, I've often seen him about the Capitol and the Willington."

"Oh, the first one—I liked his manner ; he has a good face," she averred.

"You have some doubt in regard to the other one?"

"There was something in his voice and his look that disturbs me. He was less sincere."

"Dear little girl!" exclaimed Twain, as he looked lovingly in her face, "there are no two mortals alike. It was so ordained ; else how could we know whom we love most?"

"I would know, even if all men were like you in physical appearance."

"But there is none other like you in any way, sweetheart," he replied.

Arriving at a side entrance to the hotel, Twain gave her hand an affectionate squeeze, and saying he would return immediately, passed quickly across the pavement into the corridor. It was the dinner hour, and there were few people in the hotel lobby to impede his rapid progress toward the great court, which had been constructed so as to accommodate not only a considerable number of carriages and automobiles, but also the dirigibles—the pleasure craft that dropped down into the court from time to time.

Her eyes followed the rather slight figure of the admirable lover and friend until he disappeared at the end of the corridor. Then her heart seemed to cease its functions, she knew not why. Her first impulse was to follow him. Yet her better judgment bade her wait. He would be absent only a minute, he said—a man's minute, too ; it is shorter than a woman's.

Hastily ungloving her left hand, she placed the two first fingers at the pulse point of her other wrist. This was a habit that was formed in her early girlhood. It was first resorted to at school when, on an only occasion, her teacher required that

she should remain standing sixty seconds in a conspicuous place in the room—a punishment for a slight infraction of the school rules, something pertaining to her lesson in physiology. It was by this lesson, perhaps, that she knew approximately the number of pulsations in each minute. When the sixty seconds had expired and her teacher seemed to forget, the impatient girl made bold to so inform her. This is a simple illustration indicating Enid Grey's resolute and methodical temperament. It stood her well in hand within the year.

She was surprised now to find her pulse bounding even more rapidly than when she was at school, although nearly fifteen summers had passed since her teacher's gentle admonition.

Ninety! The minute's time had passed and more. Still, she would give him another minute—a woman's minute; an hundred additional throbs of her heart should he have to finish with his friend Splicer. At the end, and he had not returned, she closed her eyes, slowly regloving her hand. The surging pulse but marked her growing trepidation.

Surely the second messenger was genuine. Could it be that Splicer?—she shuddered at the thought of such deception. And yet she was familiar with the disturbed state of the public mind, and had had some intimations of the desperation of men that are engaged in subverting the facilities of government to so-called business ends. These and kindred thoughts struggled for solution, until her face burned and her temples throbbed; her heart was sending the blood in riot to her brain.

Five minutes had now sped their everlasting course!

The grinding whir of a great dirigible's wheels resounded ominously overhead; like a wail of agony it was to her. Two other airships, seemingly, of less power than the first, shot upward like rockets from the dismal court, taking their way also to the south.

The tendrils of her emotions relaxed; she felt a sensation of

nausea, then of pain. The noisy murmur of the streets was now slowly dying in the fearful hollows of her ears.

The chauffeur had observed her deep anxiety. "I will go in search of the senator," he said. His remark, as he hastily left the machine, roused her from the impending swoon.

"Please, Ben; near the buffet you know," she replied, dejectedly.

The driver's absence marked another age of suspense for the suffering girl. There was no relief in Ben's report when he came back. The place was almost deserted, he said—two or three carriages, their colored drivers asleep on their boxes; three men in close converse on a seat near the buffet.

"One of them was the second messenger!" added Ben.

The next instant Miss Grey was on the pavement. Then she passed quickly along the corridor into the court.

The three men had gone!

O, prescient womankind! How well thy Creator hath endowed thee for blessed motherhood!—thou who must guard the way of thy toddling offspring. Is it strange, then, that thy apprehensive mind encompasseth the uncertain steps and the varying fortune of all others within the horizon of thy affections?

"I beg of you to compose yourself and return to your home. It is best. I feel sure that the senator is safe."

Bolston had arrived at the Willington, by the merest accident, to find her in a pitiable state of agitation. She had inquired of the clerk if he had seen Senator Twain. Receiving a negative answer, she went directly to the buffet and talked with "the captain." Twain had not been there, the captain was sure, as he knew him well.

She was hastening across the court to the telephone booths when the young Englishman saw her.

"Pardon me, Miss Grey. Can I be of service to you?"

"Something terrible has happened, Mr. Bolston!" she ex-

claimed. "Please notify my father and the Senate. He came—"

"You mean Twain?" he inquired, quickly divining the cause of her excitement.

"Every one seems to be asleep in this gloomy place," she continued. "No one has seen him, and yet he left me but a few minutes ago, saying he would return immediately. It seems an age! And he was on his way to the Senate, too; stopped only to pick up his friend Mr. Splicer at the buffet. Where are the officers?"

It was then that Bolston pleaded with her to be calm, and offered to escort her to the machine, saying it would not be advisable to raise an alarm.

With wide startled eyes she surveyed the dark, cavernous court, then turned and moved reluctantly toward the corridor.

"I will go," she said, "if you will remain and make a thorough investigation. He must be here—or else—"

"If he is here, rest assured I will find him," interrupted Bolston in soothing tones.

"Please do not leave the court," she pleaded. "I will return alone to the machine. I have implicit confidence in your judgment."

The chauffeur was not surprised that she should sigh, that she reeled and tottered as she passed from the auto to the doorway of her home, nor that she dropped limply into a seat on the veranda. He was offering to assist her when Aimée came.

The sun was pouring its first glory out of the east when the maid was awakened by the moanings of her mistress.

"Who knows, Aimée? Who knows? Mr. Bolston is there."

"Ah, mademoiselle!"

"They had gone!—the messenger, Aimée."

"Ze poor face it is var hot; ze hands also."

"The messenger, Aimée! Ben saw him. Yet he was not there—"

"Quick, I have ze cool water for ze face."

"Listen, Aimée! It is the balloons! And he does not come back to me!"

"Ah, Dieu!" moaned the maid.

Mrs. Grey came just then to find her despairing daughter in the throes of delirium. Her father was summoned, and as quickly as possible Doctor Richardson was called.

When the last pages of the morning papers were sent to the presses there was nothing in them by which the mystery could be measured. They contained no word on the subject that is not already within the reader's knowledge, nor as much, for Enid Grey's alarming illness was too recent for their columns. Besides, it was a private matter.

Yet, there was enough of circumstantial detail in the news columns, overlaid with decidedly suggestive headlines, to supplement a theme long to remain of universal interest. It was between the lines that the reader found the most information; he could draw his own conclusions.

Before the end of the day there were few who did not feel that a monumental wrong had been perpetrated; that it was due to the scandalous practices, recklessly followed in that day, of permitting greed to control the Government; for it was this that had aroused the Altocracy of the country, and compelled the delinquent remnants of the two old parties to combine under one banner. And yet, combination had not saved the remnant the loss of the House of Representatives, which passed the Purchase bill a month ago by a big margin. How nearly they were to losing the Senate has already been told.

What was of immediate concern to all was the whereabouts of Senator Twain, the manner of his dramatic disappearance and the identification of those responsible for it.

The remarkable event had plunged the Government into a condition of paralysis. The President, although a Conserva-

tive, and, as the public had been led to believe, in close sympathy with the moneyed autocracy so long controlling the nation's politics, seemed profoundly dazed.

The two houses of Congress met at the usual hour the next morning, and soon adjourned. The Purchase bill was in mid-air; also the suspended vote on the second amendment. The Conservatives, under the existing dolorous conditions, did not have the hardihood to press the advantage they had in the Vice President's deciding vote, and the Altrocrats were laboring under an obsession far too great to admit of their renewing the debate immediately.

Without an agreed plan or understanding about it, the Senate fell to considering other matters from day to day. Yet, both sides were wary and watchful, lest somewhere at a critical moment a secret spring be touched, as happened when Packenham stopped talking; when he read the note handed him, and, his face paling to livid whiteness, he took his seat.

Before many sessions had passed a fierce discussion ensued. It came about when Baxter criticised an item in an appropriation bill which carried an unusually large sum of money for secret service work. It had been put into the bill by the Altrocrats of the House.

Baxter smilingly inquired if it was proposed to inaugurate a widespread detective system "so as to bring private business affairs under the supervision of the Government."

"Some portion of it may be used in recovering a stolen senator whose vote appears to be necessary to the completion of a certain roll call," replied Fordyce.

A dozen Conservative senators, eager to refute Fordyce's pointed insinuation, were on their feet in an instant, clamoring for recognition. The presiding officer, using his gavel valiantly to quell the confusion, declared that Baxter had the floor.

The latter then went on to say that the words of the Altro-

cratic leader were an insult to the entire Senate. He would not call the senator to order, for he had no doubt the offensive language would be withdrawn.

"We regret the show of impatience, not to say the agitation, on the Conservative side," answered Fordyce. "I have not charged the crime to any senator or set of senators. Personally, I believe and the country believes that Twain is being forcibly detained. There are those who think they know the purpose of it all. His disappearance was at a time when his vote was vital to the pending bill."

"Does the senator say," inquired Baxter, "that the absent senator would vote for the bill in its present form were he here to do so?"

"He favors the principles embodied in the bill," was the reply. "I have no doubt about that. Nor has any other senator any doubt about it."

"Is it not true that it was his purpose to offer a substitute for the entire bill?" continued Baxter, pressing his point. "Does any Altrocratic senator know the nature of the proposed substitute?"

Fordyce was unable to make a direct answer to this mystifying question, for no one had seen the substitute; Baxter himself had only heard of it. Neither had Twain made a speech on the Purchase bill, although it was understood he intended to do so before it came to a vote.

The Conservative newspapers enlarged eloquently upon Baxter's challenge of Twain's position. Quite a number of them went further and declared the "stolen senator" might have been conveniently out of the way on his own account when the voting began.

Until now the public had been impatient of any suggestion that Twain was not an honest man. The great body of the people, close readers of the scarlet press, were strong in the

belief that certain agents of "the System" had spirited him away. But when they analyzed Baxter's speech and read the approving explanatory comments in the Conservative journals, a cloud of questioning doubts came over them. Such is the mobility of the mind of man.

CHAPTER IV

THE SENATE DAZED

When the roll is called by the presiding angel in the Great Beyond there will be no delay in recording the result, for the hosts of Heaven will not be alarmed, nor afraid; and there will be no absentees, nor chaos, nor confusion. The scene will be one of celestial grandeur and splendor, of serenity and joy ineffable—transcending even the most exalted glory of earth. Most of them that are impersonated in this veracious volume will be present, and will answer unabashed as their names are spoken.

Very often, in selecting an artistic painting to be hung on the line, it becomes necessary to examine an inferior work, for the visual powers of the connoisseur will be aided by thus contrasting the two productions. Still, the true artist's comparison will not inspire invidious suggestions. Nor can there be the slightest resemblance between a roll call in Heaven and the melancholy scene in the Senate which is now to be depicted.

The Senate prides itself, and justly, too, upon its perfect poise and its methodical deliberateness. Yet, senators and their helpers are of mortal mould, and may be discomposed by trying circumstances. It is worth relating, therefore, how it came to pass that the result of the roll call on the second amendment was not announced by the Vice President and duly spread upon the records. It was an extraordinary occurrence, in consequence

of an extraordinary event. The moment also was psychological, for those were stirring days in the arena of politics.

Fordyce, prompted by Brady, as has been related, was questioning the regularity of the pairs, and Baxter was anxious that a vote should be taken. In the average parliamentary body Fordyce would have been branded as a filibuster. Not so in the Senate, where decorum has come to be a science; where remarkable results are often accomplished in a manner before then unknown in deliberative bodies—the solemnity with which a senator makes plausible his astounding purpose, the while he eloquently protests his reverence for the rules. Elsewhere this would be called dissembling; yet senators do not dissemble. In passing, it may also be said that not a few of the elder statesmen of the body are most proficient in construing the rules their way. If a rule happens to bother them, by having it suitably construed for the occasion, a new precedent is made; the precedent then becomes the rule.

Behold, then, the gravity with which Fordyce resumed his seat, after making a fruitless "disturbance" as each pair was announced. Note, also, how Brady was nodding his approval of Fordyce's efforts, as a sign that Twain had not yet arrived, and how every other senator seemed to acquiesce in Fordyce's dilatory tactics.

Why did not some senator call him to order? Because no senator ever knows when he himself may wish to pervert the rules.

Behold, also, Baxter's smile, deeper and broader than usual, and the pleased expression on Conservative faces (Brady had now abandoned hope), when the clerk, after twice checking the names, turned to hand the long white tally sheet to the presiding officer.

The next moment the vote would be announced. It would be a tie. The Vice President would take the sheet, nonchalantly,

and assuming an air of unconcern (cautiously examining the top of the roll to be certain in regard to the way Baxter had voted, for it had been quite awhile since then, with Fordyce talking so long), he would simply say, "The chair votes aye; the amendment is adopted."

Then the occupants of the reserved stalls—the consolidators—would nudge each other, as they sat there closely packed together. They would smile, exchange knowing glances and whisper their amens, as if a great truth in pious endeavor had just been revealed.

But the clerk, taking another glance at the sheet, discovered a trivial error in his check marks. Great care is always exercised in this behalf. He faced his desk again, stooped and picked up a pen with which to make the correction. One moment was enough for this duty, but the penholder eluded him, and it took two.

The Vice President was now standing erect in his place, even with his hand extended to take the sheet, his lips already pursed to announce the vote.

Moments like these, when the result of a roll call is about to be declared by the chair, notably so if it be a vote on an important question, are moments of the greatest quiet in the Senate. Everybody is still. Senators and others on the floor do not stir. Occupants of the galleries, who tread softly as they enter or depart, now make an effort against breathing, so they may hear the important announcement.

Again the clerk was turning toward the presiding officer, and extending his hand, the one with the tally sheet in it.

Was it a sudden breeze entering through the green baize door, flying open at this instant, that swept the sheet from the clerk's grasp?—for there it was at his feet. Impossible! There is never a breeze in the Senate—none that enters through the green doors. And Fordyce had stopped talking.

Was it the force of the almost flying body of the page that came through the green door, and, with a single bound, landed near the chair, that displaced the sheet and sent it noiselessly to the soft red carpet below?

None of these whatever. In verity, it was what the page said to the Vice President in a subdued shriek; all the clerks heard it. It was the same that other pages that came through other doors with the outside news on their lips were now saying to senators, who were anxiously waiting for the concluding act in the little drama, for they were in need of nourishment. It was now long past the dinner hour, and there had been no break in the proceedings so as to allow senators to refresh themselves.

The clerks and other employés about the Senate are the brightest men to be found. They must know almost everything; not so much is required even of a senator. So, most of them knew that Twain had been expected by the Altrocrats for hours; that the Conservatives hoped he would not arrive, perhaps never. Of course they knew, too, that his vote would defeat the amendment. The very atmosphere of the chamber was now surcharged with this knowledge. Under these circumstances the nerves of men are much overwrought and least prepared for a great shock.

Therefore it was, when the first page exclaimed, "Senator Twain is killed, or something horrible!" and other pages echoed it, that the clerk, the sheet falling from his hand, stood as if petrified; that Fordyce, always alert in his leadership, solemnly moved to adjourn; that the Vice President, after an awful suspense, doubtfully and mechanically put the question; that senators were so dazed they voted neither yea nor nay, but, recovering themselves only when the gavel fell to mark the adjournment, gathered in little groups about the chamber to speculate upon the terrible tidings.

This strange and startling proceeding took place soon after

Enid Grey bade Ben wheel away from the side entrance of the Willington, and her woman's intuition had fathomed the mystery to its lowest depths, leaving no doubt in her foretelling mind in regard to the whole depressing affliction; after Aimée had assisted her to her room;—about the time, alas! that the fever came to burn its debilitating course through her young blood.

It was, moreover, not so very long after Ralph Bolston had finished a thorough investigation of the Willington premises, having met the bereaved girl in the great court and prevailed upon her to return quietly to her home. It was after he failed to find any trace of Twain, and, being now convinced that Splicer had not been there at all, had gone to "The Record" office to confer with the editor and tell him of his daughter's piteous predicament, and of his own fruitless efforts to find the missing senator.

It was then that Grey tried to get Brady at the Senate, and was told that Brady was busy; then that he called up the Sergeant-at-Arms, merely saying there was no doubt in his mind that Twain had been abducted, and the Sergeant-at-Arms exclaimed to his assistant and the pages that were in the room—"Great God! Senator Twain has been foully dealt with! Notify the Vice President and the senators."

Is it surprising, then, that the Senate, under these distressing circumstances, should have been plunged into a state of confusion, and that senators were so completely dazed that they voted neither yea nor nay when Fordyce moved to adjourn?

There were many "disturbances" in the Senate during the sessions that ensued. With the close division between parties, amounting to a tie vote, with Twain absent and unpaired, each party feared the other. In former days, before the two old parties consolidated, when the Republicans were as two to one of the Democrats, there was no danger of surprises; it was as if

there had been no Democrats so little were they regarded as a political factor. And, having waxed powerful through devotion to the fleshpots, the Republicans "played and frolicked in the ocean of bounty" in total disregard of the minority, and with as little regard for economic morality; for it was an age of calculators.

As time passed, the calculators came to be more considerate of Insurgency than they had been of the more ancient and impotent Democracy, until, finally, this militant force, supplemented by unfettered Democrats, led the way to a formidable movement based primarily upon altruism. From the regenerative effects of the process, the Altrocratic party sprang into existence and came to its present state of power—Insurgency *per se* having failed against the soulless reign of Greed.

It was but natural that there should come a realignment of political interests; it was inevitable that this must occur, for the old organizations had gone to seed; the propitious hour of their bloom had passed. And, too, their patron saints were dead; Jeffersonianism had degenerated to vacuous preaching, and only a faint memory of the precepts of the immortal Lincoln now survived. Party principles had been capitalized, and were now the property of monopoly. There was no longer an issue upon which Republicans and Democrats seriously disagreed.

It was during the slow transformation from the old to the new dispensation, with Stalwarts and Insurgents both contending for spoil, that Baxter rose to the zenith of his portentous renown; that he acquired the wonderful smile which served to tantalize poor Fordyce almost beyond endurance. The Altrocratic leader withstood the Conservative taunts in regard to Twain's non-committal attitude on the Purchase bill with commendable equanimity. He felt deep down in his heart, and the country believed with him, that Twain was sound in principle—or had been, until his political light (if that were all) was snuffed out

by violence at the hands of evil men. Yet, in the most striking passages of his speeches ; when the gallery visitors and senators, too, were hanging upon his masterfully constructed sentences, formulated from a boundless vocabulary of words; the while Baxter's scintillating smile reflecting upon him like the blinding flash of a searchlight, Fordyce all but lost his powers of eloquence. At the end of his daily effort to impeach the Conservative leader there was only one solace for him—well, in truth, Fordyce was being speeded irretrievably to intemperance.

In the stirring debates to which Twain's remarkable disappearance gave rise there were challenges and counter challenges, accusations, denials and apologies. Strange how party lines had changed. Where, during ante bellum days, the fiery southerners were given to violent resentment of northern political dominance, and voted their Democracy dogmatically ; where the Republicans, who, while building their party out of the cause and the fruit of the Civil War, for years had looked upon their opponents as descendants of demons, born of the succubi—now, old party lines were obliterated ; there was an amalgamation of fresh political interests ; an interlacing of new party ties ; an intermingling of views and a personal association and adhesion that knew no division save that which marks the difference between the Altruist and the Egoist, between patriotism and pelf. This new demarkation gave politics, especially in the Senate, a transcendent coloring—on the one side the cause of Man ; on the other the cause of Mammon ; with the Conservatives growing fewer and fewer in number until, owing to the absence of a single senator, as we have seen, the Vice President's vote alone saved them from complete overthrow.

The tragic aspects of the case made both sides pause. Under the rules the suspended vote on the second amendment to the Purchase bill was the "unfinished business." Being the unfinished business, it should have been disposed of the next morning.

Yet, even Baxter did not call attention to this fact. The subject came up unexpectedly several days later, when, in the heat of debate, Burrill ironically congratulated the Conservatives upon their "respectful consideration for the absent senator, and their recognition of the outrageous nature of the measures resorted to in effecting his removal from the scene of his faithful services."

That discussion would turn before long to a subject now on the lips of all the people was inevitable; and that Burrill's caustic words should arouse some indiscreet Conservative was to have been expected.

Senator Koppinger, reputed to know more about stocks than of statesmanship, challenged Burrill's remarks as an "undignified aspersion," and asked him to suggest a method whereby the suspended roll call might be dealt with. Koppinger was not familiar with the rules, that was evident; still, he was a personal friend of Twain's, and for this reason, if for no other, greatly regretted his absence. No senator, perhaps, was closer to Twain than Koppinger was.

"Never!" exclaimed Burrill. "Let the unrecorded vote stand as a fitting memorial always to remain in the Senate's archives—a yawning gap in the proceedings into which, down to the end of all time, designing men may look to see the terrible consequence of consolidation and its crimes. It will be an appropriate resting place, too, for the amendment offered by the distinguished Conservative leader."

This brought Halsey to his feet.

"The senator knows the rule," said Halsey. "Why did not he close the gap by asking that the vote be recorded?"

"The amendment is not ours," replied Burrill; "therefore we have no affirmative interest in the unrecorded vote. Thank God they are neither of them the property of Altrocracy!"

"The senator is jointly interested with every other senator in

the orderly procedure of the body," remarked Halsey, smoothly and persuasively. "Being so greatly troubled about the matter the senator might now ask that the vote be recorded."

"I prefer that it remain forever unrecorded," exclaimed Burrill. "I will make no resistance, however, if some Conservative asks it, though it be the author of the amendment himself."

"The author of the amendment is not in his seat at this moment, but if he were here I doubt if he would care to deprive the other side of a theme of discussion," answered Halsey, sarcastically.

"No Conservative senator will do it!" shouted Burrill. "Well he knows the fate of his hazardous cause if he did."

"That remark will be accepted in certain quarters as the acme of statesmanship." This was what Halsey said, not for the reporters' ears, but for the edification of his seatmates and himself.

And no Conservative seemed inclined to accept Burrill's challenge.

Nor did the Vice President exercise his authority to declare the result of the roll call, for that would have required the casting of his own vote to determine the fate of the second amendment, now so intimately associated with the mysterious disappearance of Cornelius Twain.

CHAPTER V

A WEDDING

But enough, for the present, of the Senate's tergiversations. It may be necessary to return to the place of sublimated power, famous for its sturdy imperturbability, at a later period in this chronicle.

It is fortunate, too, that the big world outside takes itself less seriously than the Senate, else there would be no end of material with which to feed the American appetite for humor. Again, the Senate as a whole is totally devoid of imagination, and it is even doubtful if any member of the body will ever be able to comprehend the almost ludicrous part taken by Andy Akers in the disappearance of Twain. Nor did Akers himself realize the far-reaching consequences of it, for he had only one purpose in view, and a man with a single idea is too intent upon the execution of it to see the halter that may await his own neck.

He had been told it would be agreeable to certain gentlemen with high brows and acute interest in legislative matters that concerned the guild of graspers in the industrial and commercial world if Twain could be detained from his duties in the Senate chamber while the voting on the Purchase bill was in progress. After that it was no matter. This information was conveyed to Akers by the Honorable William Giddings, a former member of a western legislature, where Giddings himself had had some successful experience in this kind of business. Giddings, as

Akers well knew, represented Sam Ives, local counsel for the C. Q. D. Railroad, who was close to the Honorable Ephraim Fox, its general counsel. Fox had been the colleague of Giddings in the legislature, but, on his accession to the position of attorney in chief to the railway company, he preferred not to deal directly with his old co-legislator. He put implicit confidence in Ives, however, as Ives, who was a professional lobbyist, had never failed him in getting favorable action upon such measures as the company wanted put through, or in sidetracking bills that were objectionable to it. In those eventful days Ives frequently called Akers to aid him; but once it happened that Andy had tied himself up, for a handsome contingent fee, in favor of a bill introduced in antagonism of the company's interests. In consequence of their diametrical purposes a breach resulted between the two lobbyists; and when, finally, the bill was defeated and Andy found himself financially stranded, he went outside the capitol building where he could see the figure of Justice holding her scales at the top of the dome, and, with eyes fixed upon the brazen image, took a fearful oath that he would "camp on Ives' trail" ever after.

Akers was a creature of moods, ugly ones for the most part. He never forgave those who were unfortunate enough to balk him in any of his schemes, however small, and was ready to suffer loss, to the limit of his last dollar, imprisonment to the end of time, if need be—death even—if by any of these he might visit vengeance upon those that offended him. Such was his vindictive nature, his relentless antipathy.

He did not fall in with Giddings' plan immediately. "I'll consider it," he replied. "Come around tomorrow."

Then he wheeled away to his little farm in the hills just outside of Washington. Here several cronies and their female companions joined him during the afternoon, among them Mrs. Eva Farnum, buxom, blithe and horsy. Next to Andy Akers,

Eva loved the pretty roadsters of his modest stables. There was a jest indulged by the jockeys of Bennings' track that explained this dual attachment. It was said her first husband, in a horse trade with Andy, had managed to "throw in his wife to boot." Be that as it may, Eva and Andy were comrades from about that time, and on this very day they participated in some kind of a joint marriage ceremony which was quite as binding, no doubt, as had been her Reno decree of divorce as an instrument of marital dissolution from Ben Farnum.

She was the recipient and conserver of Akers' confidences as well, and, as they drove to her home in the city on this the first evening of their honeymoon, he told her of Giddings' desire that Twain should be kept away from the Senate. Greatly to her surprise, he also said he intended to comply with Giddings' request.

"Have you thought of the consequences, my dear Andy, should Giddings turn on you?"

"What! Bill Giddings?" he exclaimed, scornfully. "Do you suppose I am relying upon *him* for protection should it come to that? Not on your sweet life, Eva. This is a five-ply transaction, my dear; I am the first ply; Giddings is the second. There are three more. Giddings does not know that I am on; he's a fool, a cheap one at that. Put all my eggs in one basket? You do me an injustice, Eva. Three more, my honey!" Then he laughed sardonically. "And the higher up, my dear, the greater the responsibility, or perhaps I should say the greater the respectability. Besides, Sam Ives is one of them."

Years had passed since the legislative incident that turned Akers against Ives. That was long before he met Eva, and she knew nothing about it. Perhaps Akers preferred not to show Eva this side of his unforgiving nature, lest she flee from him as from a pestilence.

"The fifth-ply fellow will never permit your Andy to come to grief, rest assured of that."

"But think of poor Enid Grey. She loves Twain, as I love you, Andy, and it would break her heart. See! There they go now," she exclaimed, pointing to the senator and Miss Grey as they rode together across the bridge and on to the Stone Mill bridle path. "What a splendid chap he is," she added half sorrowfully.

"Yes, I've seen them out here almost every day this spring," replied Akers. "Twain does not look well. It may be his mind is troubled. There is said to be a queer streak in the family, way back yonder. Hope it's too far back to catch him. He's a good fellow, and I would not like to have him go dippy."

But this was mere gossip. One can hear almost anything about a senator.

"And she is delightful, Andy, and so beautiful. I saw her shopping this morning, and heard her talking to the manager—the sweetest voice I ever heard, Andy; just like fine music. What a shame it would be."

Even "the Farnum," as she was called by her intimate acquaintances long after her second marriage, was not devoid of sentiment and womanly sympathy. And she indulged a liking for Twain that always puzzled Andy.

"It's too utterly bad, Eva, but I'm no Christian Endeavorer; you know that; and there's big money in it, my dear, if it comes out my way—cash, my honey, cash!"

"Yes, I know, Andy; but will they let you get that close to it?—close enough to—"

"Trust me! If they knew even now, that I was wise—Bill thinks he knows it all!—why, that fifth-ply fellow would be here in the morning with a satchelful of it."

"Call him on the long distance tonight, Andy, and tell him.

Don't trust Giddings in so delicate a matter as this." By now her woman's sympathy was vanishing, and a perfect sea of big new hats she saw that morning when she was listening to Enid Grey's wonderful voice rose before her gaze.

"I may need your help, Eva, if I go into this. You know some of the big people, and they talk over the card table. Keep your ears open."

"And the wine flowing," she added.

Then they both laughed.

Eva Farnum was an adept in this regard, and an encyclopedia in matters of social gossip. She knew, only by sight of course, quite all the members of official swelldom in Washington. Her home in the city was in a well known street running along the lower ledge of the fashionable quarter. Among her nocturnal visitors, besides a few choice beauties of her own sex, were several gentlemen high up in society circles. One of these was a Russian captain, Nicholas Mikleskoff by name, entitled under European custom to the prefix of count. Another was the only son of Andrew Holt, famed as the possessor of millions so fabulous in number that his chief trouble was to find suitable investment of the increment, although the junior Holt, now coming into his twenty-first year at a rapid gait, relieved his father of much anxiety in this regard, his abiding passion being the gaming table and the race track.

It was from the small talk of her visitors that Mrs. Farnum was enabled to store her receptive mind with valuable knowledge concerning the personal affairs of "the best people," while the games of "bridge" and "draw," prominent among other enervating pastimes at her richly-furnished residence, were going on.

How perfectly natural it was, then, that she should know, almost at first hands, of the impecunious Russian captain's love for Margaret Holt, heiress to a vast fortune; of Andrew Holt's ambition to win a seat in the Senate from the contending politi-

cians of a border state, where he lived in sumptuous style with his family during the summer months; of the prominent figure Stephen Holt, supported by his good looks and his financial expectancies, was cutting among the belles of glitterdom. There was much else that she knew.

Bantering remarks concerning these and kindred current topics fell nimbly from the unguarded tongues of Mrs. Farnum's special guests when the morning hours were waxing and the wine was surging triumphantly in the blood.

So that Andy Akers, although he made it a point never to be present at these hilarious meetings, nevertheless became a veritable repository for all kinds of secrets and confidences that put him in close touch with inside life at the nation's Capital, and gave him advantageous fitness for the duties of his peculiar profession.

Agreeable to the appointment that had been made, Akers and Giddings met the next morning. They were together only a few minutes, and when Giddings closed the door of Akers' dingy little office in an old-fashioned three-story building facing the Pension bureau, he strode hopefully through Judiciary Square toward the Capitol. Arriving at the great marble structure on the hill, he threaded the labyrinthian corridors until he came to what was perhaps the most uninviting committee room in "the Crypt"—and there are many such in that part of the building. The Crypt, so-called because of its subterranean character, was constructed many years ago at enormous expense for the accommodation of minority senators and members and their clerks. It was here, in dampness and in gloom, until the modern brilliantly-lighted and more airy office buildings were erected, that newly-elected legislators were obliged to take their first lessons in statesmanship—the dictation of thousands of answers to self-seeking, complaining constituents who imagined that the life of a congressman was a bed of roses laid on a

lambswool mattress with golden springs under it. But this was only one of the enchantments that distance lent to the view. And yet this disillusion had its compensation for the legislator, for if he succeeded in persuading his people that his services were too valuable to be dispensed with, one day he would be graduated to better quarters on the upper floors, which was only one of the poor fruits of long service. And when his minority party had convinced the country that the last tariff law was purposely loaded with vicious provisions that would "oppress the multitude of consumers and make millions for the few," or "bankrupt the capitalist and hunger the many"—dependent, of course, upon whichever party was in power;—when the Crypt dweller transformed or "reformed" the nation's politics and turned the minority into a majority, he would then be entitled to the "best" committee room and to additional clerks, along with other perquisites that belonged to his new responsibilities. And still, I have known senators who, after thus "coming into their own," as was sometimes said, had expressed a desire to go back to the simpler legislative life in the Crypt. Such is the reward of ambition.

Giddings' object in going to the Capitol after his interview with Akers was not of very great moment; in a measure he already knew that a vote on the Purchase bill was near at hand, but Akers had insisted that he must know positively, or as definitely as possible. There is no way by which knowledge of this character can be reduced to certainty; and yet there are old employés of the Senate who make a study of such things, and have been known to indulge in some remarkably accurate opinions. It was one of these ancient Moseses that Giddings sought in the dingy committee room of the Crypt. Afterward he returned to Akers' office and made report.

"One week is a very short time in which to get ready for a business like this and carry it to a finish," was Akers' reply. "But

I'll do the best I can. Will Ives walk up to the gun, Bill, if necessary? I know he's got nerve, but has he got enough for this high class event? It won't be any clambake, this won't, Bill. I'm not afraid of you; you're good grit. But if Sam gigs we're gone—that's all."

"It's the biggest thing Sam ever tackled, Andy, and you know the bigger the boodle the harder Sam fights. He's sure safe. But of course, Andy, there ain't going to be any violence; only a brief detention as it were—a slight interruption of the treacle-fest out at Grey's; then he'll come back to her more loving than ever, and be glad to. She won't know what happiness is till then."

"That's all very fine, Bill; but you don't have to do the job yourself. Getting him away from her is the sticker. Maybe she'll have to go, too. Then old Grey would just pull the Goddess of Liberty off the top of the bungalow up there. (It looks like an Indian chief anyway, but that don't signify.) Whew! but wouldn't her father rip up things with that 'Record' of his? And the Government would simply *have* to do something, whether it was the right thing or not. Now, Bill, I'm going to hold you personally responsible for Sam's conduct. If he quits, you've got to kill him. If you don't, I'll—"

"Don't say it, Andy. You won't have to do anything quite so unparliamentary as that. Remember, we're dealing with a lot of distinguished gentlemen, not highwaymen or the like. Sam was alderman of his town for many years, and Twain's in the Senate. See!"

Akers smiled grimly.

A full week passed before he again saw Eva Farnum. He came in very late one night, after Eva's guests had gone away and she herself was in bed, letting himself into the house through a back entrance that led to the pantry. Andy had formed an early habit of taking a late "snack." As he sat munching at

the scattered remnants of cheese and crackers and the remains of a lobster Newburg, washing them down with a bottle of flat beer that seemed to be waiting for him in the iceless cooler, Eva came down. She squatted quickly on an old carpet-covered hassock, drawing one small pink-white foot up under her, and looked at Andy through wondering eyes somewhat bleared by the long hours she had been keeping during his extended absence; and the Russian captain, Stephen Holt and their companions had played long and hard the previous evening, lingering over their midnight repast far into the morning to discuss the strange happenings of the past two days.

"Did *you* do it, Andy?" she asked.

"That would be telling," he replied.

Then he lit a cigar and leaned back in his chair, puffing rings of smoke and watching them complacently as they curled toward the ceiling. Eva was greatly puzzled. How was it possible for him to be so serene and self-satisfied, and all civilization agog over the atrociousness of the crime—the kidnapping of an American senator—and he, Andy Akers, her newest husband, the immediate author of it?

"I am sorry you told me anything," she said, and she looked deeply hurt.

"Well, he's gone, isn't he?" remarked Akers.

"And I'm sorry for that, too, Andy."

Whereupon he pulled a thick package of crisp bills from an inside pocket and slowly dealt five of them off the top. Returning the package, which was altogether too large to admit of being rolled, to the receptacle in his waistcoat, he laid the five one hundred dollar bills on her lap.

"Say no more about it," said he, "but tell me how your friends take it. Are they disturbed?"

"They talked of nothing else last night, and seemed greatly excited. The Holt kid says it will bring on a political revolu-

tion, and there'll be more shooting and hanging than anything."

"Rot!" exclaimed Andy. "That youngster's mind wobbles, what little he has."

"And the Russian declared that what this country needed was a Siberia, where murderers, abductors and the like could be perpetually penalized. Those were his very words."

"Satan rebuking sin," replied Andy, who had not learned this by reading but by absorption. Giddings was inclined to be bookish, and was full of pat proverbs. "What about the women—the Greys?" asked Andy.

"The kid says that Miss Enid is just plumb comfoozled, whatever that is. And did you see "The Record?" It says hell is yawning for—"

"Of course it would get excited," interrupted Andy. "Old Grey's been reforming things in his paper so long he don't know how to take a joke any more."

"A joke, Andy? I can't understand you, dear. But you haven't yet told me if you—"

"I'm going to bed, Eva; I'm sleepy."

And he must have been, for he was scarcely on his pillow until he was snoring peacefully, like a man without even a shadow of guilt on his mind. Eva was greatly distressed. She could not fathom the cause of his optimism, but lay awake long after daylight pondering the problem, holding the precious bank notes tightly in her hand.

CHAPTER VI

MARGARET HOLT'S DOUBTS

Two weeks had now passed by since the disappearance of Cornelius Twain. The public mind, so used to violent sensations, was again assuming a normal attitude, albeit the scarlet press continued to cry to Heaven (at very long distance) for avengement.

Poor Enid Grey, recovered from the first heavy blow, and advised by Doctor Richardson, was taking the air, driving with her mother, but not among the Maryland hills, as formerly. She preferred unfamiliar places—the unworked roads leading through the solitudes of Virginia's deep woods, far beyond Mount Vernon, where the first American President, more than a century ago, followed the hounds over his vast estate, indulging hopeful meditations concerning the future glory of the new Republic! It is amidst such simple scenes as these that the perturbed emotions are soothed; that the fevered mind is cooled and strengthened; that the spirit is reëndowed.

She avoided discussion of the horrifying subject even with her mother, and reluctantly asked the driver to turn toward the city only when the shades of evening came to emphasize the gloom of her despair. After a few days a note of cheerfulness could be detected in her voice, and a new light in her eyes bespoke the slow return of healthful animation. Some mysterious influence, best understood by psychologists, perhaps, seemed to

tell her there was hope. Until now she had listened dreamily to her father's vague speculations—mere attempts to console her; how well she knew it—and the many letters of sympathy from her intimate friends remained unopened on her desk. She saw no callers save Margaret Holt, who came each morning, bringing a great fresh rose. Better still, Margaret brought the sunshine of her resplendent nature; yet her visits always ended in tears for both of them and this but added to the depression.

There had been nothing of serious moment in Margaret Holt's happy life to stir the deeper emotions—no disappointment nor other calamity to cause her to suffer. For almost twenty-three years had she known the joy that envelops and takes possession of healthful, wholesome creatures; and she was an only daughter, too, worshipped by indulgent and opulent parents and beloved by all. Nor as yet had Captain Mikleskoff's passionate, almost fierce protestations of love served to rouse the corresponding response that surely abides in hearts like hers. And if one reminded her of the existence of Page-Bannister, the Altrocratic aspirant for the Presidency, whom she met at the home of Enid Grey only a month ago, so little did she know of public men or care about public affairs, her probable answer would not have been at all surprising: "He is something or other in politics, I believe, but I cannot recall just what. Oh, yes, he has aspirations to be a candidate for office; that's it—a very pleasant gentleman, indeed, with a firm, serious face, suggesting the classical, and such a winning smile." Margaret would at least have retained a faint recollection of the striking features. And yet, she was not aware of the deep impression she had left upon his busy mind. How, then, could she be expected, in view of her exceptional lack of sophistication anent the poignant experiences that come to

so many of us, to fathom the anguish that was tearing remorselessly at the heart of her disconsolate friend?

"One is so greatly depressed by this early summer heat, Enid, dear, as to be altogether miserable. Papa says it is delightfully cool in the mountains. He sailed down from Holtleigh in the dirigible this morning, and is trying to persuade mamma to return with him, but he will fail, for she detests air machines and will not go near one of them, the precious silly. Still, we are preparing to go to the mountain home as soon as may be, leaving this sweltering place to its fate. Come with us, dear, until Ashhurst is ready for you. Please do not refuse."

"I had not given the mountains a thought, Margy, with all else on my mind. Perhaps it will be better; and I would miss you so much. Yes, I will go. How kind and thoughtful you are always. Thank you, too, for the rose, which seems to nod its approval of your plan."

So it was settled that the two dear, sweet friends—one now the epitome of sadness and the other the embodiment of gladness—would soon take themselves to the Blue Ridge region for the remaining summer months.

Still, there were the many harassing things that must be attended to before they could be off, and even while they were embracing each other as Margaret was taking her leave, the telephone in Enid's "den" just off her sitting room began to buzz.

"Oh!" exclaimed Enid, much startled at the sound. "The maid must have switched the key in dusting the room this morning. The vexatious, noisy thing has been shut off—ever since—"

"Oh, Enid! *never* suppress a telephone; it's much worse luck than to banish a cat. I would die of ennui if mine failed to call. It gives me a thrill that is positively refreshing, and

I grasp the receiver as I would the hand of a long lost friend. Besides, but for the telephone and thoughtful people at the other end who do not forget us, we should be obliged to depend upon the sleepy old newspapers for matrimonial news—engagements, elopements, even divorces."

By this time the buzzing in the "den" had ceased, and Margaret almost reproached Enid because she had not answered it.

"It's Enid, father. Pardon me for making you wait. What is it? Oh! You are an old dear, anyway—too indulgent in my case, I fear. Yes? Oh! Some one to dinner tonight? Most informally, of course. As you wish, father, but I'm afraid I shan't be very interesting. Still, I'll do my best. Margy is with me, and she has persuaded me to go with her to the cool mountains very soon. Tell her what? Oh! That it's much colder in Russia. What a tease you are! Goodbye, dear."

"It may be cold in Russia, Enid, but I know a gentleman of that country whose ardor belies the climate," said Margaret with a sunny laugh.

"Paprika?" suggested Enid.

"Pungent cayenne mixed with vodka, rather," added Margaret.

Enid was more cheerful now. How could it be otherwise with her dearest girl friend as a companion?—a perpetual ray of iridescence, and never an obscuring cloud or shadow to darken the enthusiasm of her pleasing temperament.

"Oh, I've something to tell you, Enid—but not now," her exhilarating laugh ringing melodiously through the rooms.

"Captain Mikleskoff, I am sure," exclaimed Enid. "Do tell me. Has he—"

"Yes—no. Oh, Enid, such an ardent, tender speech!—like the onrush of a mighty torrent—or it would have been—"

"And you dammed the stream?"

"Like a silly," exclaimed Margaret. "But it was so unex-

pected—and the hour so late. Of course I could not refuse his request this morning that he be permitted to come to Holtleigh. He looked quite undone as if he'd had a sleepless night. It would be cruel to deny him. But isn't it jolly! Think of it! To have stirred the emotions of a scion of nobility, a stolid barbarian from the frozen zone—no, he's quite civilized. Not a word about it, Enid; no one must know—only you and I. Wouldn't the dowagers revel?"

"Oh, Margy, you haven't really—"

"Neither the one nor the other, dear. Still, I suppose it must come to that before long. He's so very interesting, so different from Mr.—what's his name?—oh, Mr. Bannister; Page Bannister—a very simple name, isn't it? How would it look on a visiting card?—'Mrs. Page Bannister'—"

"White House," added Enid.

"Or 'Countess Nicholas Mikleskoff'—"

"Tsarskoi-Sélo, Russia."

"That is too far away," said Margaret. "Ah, me!"

They were silent for a time. Then Enid, who was very deeply interested in her friend's happiness, broke the silence, saying:

"Mr. Bannister would seek you for the true, sweet girl that you are, dear, and his love would be lasting."

"If only it might be tinged with the romantic, the have-me-or-I-die quality, like the Captain's," replied Margaret with a cheery laugh. "Brother Stephen says the Captain is no longer interested in the games or the horses, but sits at night on a hard wooden bench beneath the park trees and looks at the moon. How absurd!"

"The poetic instinct, perhaps, my dear. It may not be love."

"Yet, his interpretations of fair Luna's vows—but it is an 'inconstant moon,' isn't it? And lovers vow to the moon, not the moon to lovers, the foolish things!"

"'At which time would I, being but a moonish youth, grieve, be effeminate, changeable, longing and liking,'" quoted Enid. "How well Shakespeare seemed to know of lovers' vows; 'liking,' he says, not 'loving.' And 'changeable,' too. May not that be the possible difference between Mr. Bannister and the Captain? Besides, Mr. Bannister is so distinguished. Father says he is sure of election and is destined to be a great leader."

"Ah, me!" sighed Margaret again. "It is a great problem, isn't it?"

"And one never knows beforehand of the tribulation in it," added Enid, sorrowfully, a piercing pang in her heart.

"I would forego all hope for myself, Enid, dear, if I could only lift the great burden that is crushing you."

"And I value your friendship beyond all measure, Margy. Hence my solicitude for you. I would have you happy in your choice. Let your heart decide, dear; that is the only way. Do not forget that the Captain's imperial blood courses through veins that may be swollen with tyranny and oppression, even unfaithfulness.

First, with abundant gold are we constrained
To buy a husband, and in him receive
A haughty master. Still doth there remain
One mischief than this mischief yet more grievous,
The hazard whether we procure a mate
Worthless or virtuous.

Margaret made no reply. She, too, had misgivings in regard to the Captain's real motive. Then, as if to change the drift of discussion, she referred pleasantly to the informal dinner which Mr. Grey had arranged for that evening.

"It will divert your mind, Enid; and I am quite sure that splendid Englishman is to be one of the guests."

"Dear Mr. Bolston, yes, and Senator Koppinger also. Father has a purpose in bringing them together at this time, I have no doubt."

"That crusty old bachelor senator? How ever will he get rid of all his money, Enid? No chick nor child to inherit it—and he a woman hater too, I am told. Such selfishness, forsooth!"

"He has an old maid sister," remarked Enid.

"And she is equally wealthy," added Margaret. "The survivor will get both fortunes. I do not believe in the law of supply and demand. Isn't that what they call it?"

"But there is the inexorable law of compensation, Margy—of reward and punishment—and it cannot be either repealed or amended. Nor can riches escape it."

John Koppinger belonged to the class represented by the occupants of the reserved stalls in the Senate galleries, when, as has been shown in a previous chapter, and according to the theory advanced by some of the newspapers, they seemed to know that Packenham would stop talking and sit down at a particular moment, and Packenham didn't disappoint them.

The millionaire senator was the possessor of vast properties, and money was coming to him as easily as babies to the hovels of the poor, where destitution is greatest. He had made early investments in low-priced railroad stocks, and had converted them at par, under an act of Congress, into many thousands of acres of prairie lands in the west. Afterwards, these lands had been exchanged, under other acts of Congress, for vast areas of valuable timber. In fact, Koppinger was what at one time was commonly known as a "lumber baron," and later he was politely termed a "conservationist!" In common with some other big timber men, when they came to own most of the forests, he believed that such as they did not own should be conserved—withdrawn from market—thus leaving the "barons" to control the output and incidentally the price of lumber. In furtherance of the policy of conservation, Koppinger became, first a member of a forestry association, and subsequently he

entered the Senate—"on a raft," as a contemporary satirist declared. Here, along with others of his sort, he was classed by another writer of satire as one kind of an anarchist. But let that pass.

Notwithstanding the common report upon which Margaret based her opinion, he was a polished, agreeable person, and on that account was a welcome visitor at the Grey home. Like all his class, he distrusted the rule of the people and was strong in his opposition to the rising Altocracy. Had he lived at a much earlier period he would have been written down as a Federalist.

Margaret was very still and pensive for a time. She was thinking deeply, as if the philosophy in Enid's last remark disturbed her.

"What a wonderful woman you are, Enid. . You always make me think way back in my head. Until I am with you I seem to be forever cutting my leaves with a hairpin, which is a very primitive and thoughtless thing for a woman to do. Please remember me to Mr. Bolston. I like him. He is so different." Here she paused, but Enid finished the sentence:

"From others who come to us from abroad? Is that it, Margy?"

"I'm afraid it is," she replied.

"I am so very glad you are considering the subject from this point of view, Margy. Too many American girls see only the 'plenteous adumbrations' of rank and title on the manly breast and do not pause to look within. It is no disparagement of Mr. Bolston to say that his decorations are very meager."

"Yet he is of good family, no doubt. It must be so with one of his exceptional qualities."

"The very best, father tells me—old Irish ancestry."

"No matter, Enid; his deep interest in this sad affair, his solicitude for you, is a touching tribute of loyalty to Senator Twain, whose true friend he will prove to be."

"A nobleman without a title, Margy."

And with this encomium upon the scion of an impoverished yet proud and worthy English family, Enid Grey and Margaret Holt again embraced each other and parted in grateful tears, to meet on the morrow and discuss preparations for the early hegira from the heated Capital.

CHAPTER VII

SOME DIPLOMATIC LYING

Long before Margaret got home—she had some shopping to do—her telephone was ringing.

"It is Enid, Margy. How stupid of me not to have asked you to be with us at dinner. I feel terribly guilty. You will understand. Don't refuse, please."

Margaret understood, if such were necessary. She did not refuse, although on her return from down town a messenger, with a note and a bunch of bloom from the Captain, was waiting. The Captain implored the privilege of a call that evening; there was something "very important" he wished to say, and he was sure it would not keep until he could see her at Holtleigh. So she dispatched an answer saying he might come the next day at four thirty; that she had an engagement for the evening. Margaret's conscience did not reproach itself in the least. Why should it? The Captain had no priority; she disposed of her time as she pleased. Besides, she preferred the Grey dinner to his company, for in the one case there would be a feast of reason, in the other a mere repetition of so much she had heard before. This was not a state of mind for one suspected of being in love.

Under the peculiar circumstances, a sort of funereal reserve might be expected to prevail at an informal dinner like the one this evening at Mr. Grey's. But, as yet, the reader is not very

well acquainted with this unusual man. Knowing him so well, I shall enlarge upon him. As previously said, he was an editor; but I have not indicated the class of writers to which he belonged. He was a thoughtful man, therefore he should not be put down off hand as sympathizing unduly with the scarlet press, much less as being a member of that guild of devouring sensationalists. Remember, too, that he did not believe in "editing his newspaper in the counting room," nor practice it. It was this that contributed to his other exceptional qualities and helped to make him powerful in the field of journalism. But his dominant characteristic was in not saying a thing editorially for the sake of rhetorical effect, intended to stir the popular imagination into hysterical wrath. He preferred to mould the public mind so that it would find its way normally along the channels of common sense, even against the lines of least resistance. Such was the patriotic purpose of the *editor*, who had learned to control his passions. But with Arthur Grey, the *man*, it was different. Indeed, there were two Arthur Greys. The other one was imaginative, impetuous, and he would have been dangerous but for Bolston and his own power of self-restraint when danger was imminent. The public did not know this one; only his immediate friends knew him, and among these his other self was not included: the editor was a total stranger to the man, but the man knew the editor very well.

Tonight we are not dining with the editor; he is in his sanctum counseling moderation in dealing with the things called trusts and monopolies, and advising these powerful elements in our industrial economy to act on the square with the multitude, the only method by which combinations of capital may survive and be of lasting benefit to mankind. He does not even hint at the popular theory that they are at the bottom of Twain's

misfortunes, so very cautious is he, while pleading for justice, not to do injustice.

But our host has just lit a cigar, and is pacing the floor between the table and large, ornate sideboard against the wall of the ample dining-room. Mrs. Grey, a calm, gracious, white-haired grand dame, and Margaret, Enid, Senator Koppinger, Mr. Bolston and I have remained in our seats. My being present was an afterthought of the host's. Koppinger has been complimenting the editor on the dignified and conservative attitude of "The Morning Record." It was this, perhaps, that moved the man Grey to rise rather unceremoniously from the table.

"A newspaper's policy must be all of that, senator, if it would maintain its respectability, come weal or woe to any of its friends, or those even who are closer to us than mere friends." Then, turning quickly so as to face Koppinger, and with great emphasis, he said: "But, senator, should it turn out that Cornelius Twain has been abducted and that the thing called 'the System' is responsible for it—there won't be room enough in hell for the scoundrels I'll help to send there for eternal punishment."

"Oh, Arthur!" "Father!" exclaimed Mrs. Grey and Enid in unison.

"I quite agree with Mr. Grey," said Koppinger, quickly. "If it turns out that way, the place he mentions would be too good for them."

This put "the crusty old bachelor" on better footing in Margaret's estimation, as her glad eyes bore witness. "Bravo!" she exclaimed. Enid did not look up. Her gaze was fixed intently upon the decoration of a storm-tossed ship in the concave of a large dish on the table, and she was pale from suppressed emotion. It was all suggestive of her harrowing thoughts, no doubt.

"I apologize, of course, for my heated remark," said Grey, "and my apology extends to whatever else I might say should I give vent to my feelings tonight."

All eyes turned toward Koppinger, who was now smiling in an incredulous way, for he placed no credence in common report, and, on account of his business connections and great wealth, he was expected to flout the idea of monopoly's immediate responsibility for the much bruited outrage.

Notwithstanding his emphatic approval of the editor's private view, it is not certain that had Koppinger been compelled to take sides in the matter he would not have openly espoused the cause of the Master Monger, and fallen in with the theory of some Conservative newspapers that Twain had disappeared of his own volition. This was a plausible theory, anyway, for some politicians, however honest they may in reality prefer to be, have been known to avoid disagreement with the powerful interests that insist upon taking a hand in the business of selecting senators, even under the primary system; which reminds me that Twain's term in the Senate would end on the fourth of March following. Indeed, the campaign for the choosing of his successor was already on, and Eph Fox, Sam Ives and their satellites were on the ground laying the wires to defeat him.

"The business interests of the country would not stoop to such a thing as abduction," remarked the senator.

"'The Record' has been endeavoring to encourage some one to say that in the Senate," replied the editor. "No senator seems inclined to do so, nor even to dispose of the unfinished business now before the body; and should it fall out that public opinion is right about it, the Senate itself will be the greatest sufferer, innocent though I believe it to be. That is the pity of it, senator."

"All public men are under the ban nowadays, Mr. Grey, as a

result of the fierce storm of denunciation that is sweeping over the land, and it requires rare courage, indeed, for any one to attempt a defense, either of himself or the policies he believes in. Whoever essayed to do so would merely invite a fresh assault."

"True, senator," replied the editor. "With few exceptions, I do not believe our public men are blamable for business conditions. Except insofar as the multitude are finally persuaded to accept as true what the politicians say about one another in the heat of debate, I concede there is more smoke than fire. There is another irritating element: The mails are crammed with publications that are far more dangerous than the politicians. In order to enhance their circulation, that they may increase their advertising rates, they print all manner of hysterical stuff, indulging in a perfect carnival of adjectives about the general rottenness of public affairs and the corruptness of public men. Untutored minds that cannot read between the lines are thus misled and confused, to the detriment of the vast army of men who are striving to lead lives of righteousness."

"I'm so glad 'The Record' does not belong to that class, papa," exclaimed Enid, her face brightening.

"Thank you, dear; the editor of 'The Record' aims to be fair, I believe. But there is a deeper reason, Senator Koppinger, for the suspicion and discontent abroad in the land today. The great cause is Money Madness. It had its inception in the minds of a very few men, but it has gradually spread to almost every class of humanity, until now it is a monster of such hideous mien that only the Almighty One is strong enough to smite it to a finish."

"And He will do it," added Mrs. Grey, hopefully.

"Yes," continued Mr. Grey, "He will do it. It is beyond the power of man—even those that blew the evil life into it."

"And 'The Record' will help to destroy it, Mr. Grey, will it

not?" exclaimed Margaret, naïvely, her great blue eyes fixed admiringly on our host. Even the Englishman laughed—but he was of Irish descent! "Enid's father is just splendid anyway," continued Margaret, her altruistic nature now thoroughly aroused.

This put an end, temporarily at least, to Grey's passionate arraignment of things, and the little company retired to the drawing room. I could but feel that it was the man Grey that was talking, not the editor of that name, though the "man" had spoken truthfully.

During the colloquy at the table my attention was drawn to Bolston's quiet demeanor. He sat at Koppinger's right but one seat removed from the senator. This seat was occupied by Miss Holt, who almost turned her back upon the honored guest of the evening (honored because of his official position) the better to observe the host as he paced the floor behind and to the left of the Englishman. Except to reply to the hostess when she addressed him, parenthetically, once or twice, Bolston had not spoken during the two hours or more we were in the dining room. Although his head inclined forward as if he were admiring the carnations and Jacqueminot roses scattered loosely on a great center piece of Sèvres, his eyes were turned persistently upon Koppinger's immobile features. It is doubtful if he had ever been more deeply absorbed in the study of human nature at any time during his special service at Scotland Yard, some years ago, under the immediate direction of the Home Secretary, than he was tonight in reading the millionaire senator's face. And when we were in the drawing room he managed to sit in the shadow of a great bunch of chrysanthemums that plumed themselves from a high Rookwood vase on a heavy old mahogany table, from which vantage place he continued his psychological research.

Koppinger, wary politician and business man though he was,

seemed quite oblivious to it all. He was now making himself agreeable to Margaret, which turned out to be somewhat difficult, for she did not like him quite as well as she had thought she might, after he coincided with Mr. Grey in regard to crowding the Bottomless Pit with murdered monopolists, because he had laughed uproariously at her sympathetic suggestion that 'The Record' would help the Almighty when the time came to smite the Philistines, and Margaret was only waiting for the moment when she could counter upon him for this mirthful display at her expense. She saw her opportunity when Koppinger, at a loss now how he should proceed further in the face of Margaret's disconcerting manner, reached vacantly for a pretty volume on the teakwood stand near him.

"Have you read the Golden Rule, Senator?" she asked.

"N-no, but I've read criticisms of it in a literary periodical."

"Do tell me what they say about it," she exclaimed, deeply interested, of course.

"Well, literary criticism takes such a wide range I do not quite recall what this particular critic did say, but I think he said it was crudely done."

Koppinger, looking as serious as a bishop, was now getting on so well with Margaret that he was speaking loud enough for the rest to hear him; but, taking a glance in the direction of Bolston, he saw that the Englishman, from the shadow of the chrysanthemums, was struggling to restrain himself from laughing outright. Koppinger colored profusely; yet his quick wit came to the rescue just in time to save him.

"I intend to read the Ten Commandments as soon as I can find time to get a suitable copy," he said, dryly. Then they all laughed.

"By all means, senator," exclaimed Grey. "You will find in the volume all there is on morals. And do not fail to read Matthew nineteen, twenty-four."

"The story of the rich man and the camel, senator," added Margaret, laughing merrily.

"A mere metaphor," replied Koppinger. "But who knows the size of that particular needle's eye? In these days of big things it may be quite large enough to accommodate—even me."

"If not," remarked our host, "the American Spike Company will see to it that one of ample dimensions is installed; and, should the Spike Company need help, it will have only to apply to the First Mortgage Bank, of New York, which assisted it a few years ago, after a visit to the White House, in taking over the Southern Soot Company, in violation of law, in order to prevent a panic. Ye gods!" exclaimed Grey, who had been a close observer of current events and was sometimes inclined to sarcasm.

Bolston had withdrawn his persistent gaze from Koppinger's direction and was now talking to Enid, in a modulated tone.

"Senator Twain has an aunt in Boston, I am told."

"Yes," she answered, "his father's half sister, who is very greatly devoted to him, as he is to her."

"Do you know her?" he inquired.

"No, but he has often spoken of her to me. He visited her for a week only recently."

"Have you her address?"

"Yes. She lives in Charles street, I do not recall the number, but I have it."

"Do you mind giving it to me?"

"I have it upstairs. If you will excuse me I will get it for you."

"And her name?"

"I think he never called her by name."

Enid returned shortly and handed the Englishman a card on which was written the address of Senator Twain's Boston

relative—his only relative, he had told Enid, his parents being dead, and he the sole immediate family survivor.

"This is the number from which he wrote me while he was there. I assume it is the place of her residence. Your deep interest, Mr. Bolston, has been a great support to me, and I am depending upon you." This was spoken in a low tone, as she leaned toward him from her place on the lounge, where he, too, was now sitting. Then, in a half whisper, he said:

"I leave for Boston night. Please say nothing about it."

By this time Koppinger was watching the Englishman out of the corner of his eye. Bolston knew it, and was now convinced that the millionaire senator, if he chose to do so, could throw a great flood of light on the problem that was turning in the minds of everyone in the room. He was not disposed at that moment to force Koppinger's hand, for he feared that such a thing might cause an awkward revelation. Indeed, so uncertain was he in regard to the nature of the bachelor senator's knowledge on the subject he did not dare betray his own suspicion. Koppinger's attitude might be entirely proper, thought Bolston. There was the possibility—a most likely one, all things considered—that it was an affair of the heart, in which the millionaire was the solitary actor, for it could not be that Enid Grey was cognizant of it. Besides, there was no reason for haste; he could await further developments. And yet, as he struggled with the thoughts which Koppinger's attitude had aroused in him—and in him alone, as he hoped—his noblest emotion pressed for action. Enid's confiding words had impressed him deeply. This, with her superlative beauty, stirred his warm, chivalric nature. To merit her confidence was a great privilege; in the end, to deserve her gratitude was to be forever blessed.

Koppinger thought it very strange that the old aunt had not come from Boston or made an inquiry of some kind, for

surely she could not be unaware of what had happened, with all the newspapers devoting extra space to the subject. He asked Mr. Grey how he accounted for the fact; but the editor, seeming to have no opinion about it, submitted the question to his daughter.

Enid replied saying the aunt was quite old and feeble. Perhaps those in whose care she was had thought it wise not to shock her with the news. Besides, she had written to her, addressing the letter "For the aunt of Senator Twain, No.—Charles street;" yet no reply had been received.

"I will write the mayor of Boston first thing tomorrow," said Koppinger. "I know him intimately. Will you give me the number in Charles street, Miss Grey?"

"Pardon me," said Bolston in his quiet way, "but would not such a course result in an official search being made, with the usual publicity by the press?"

Koppinger eyed the Englishman closely. Then he replied: "Perhaps you are right about it."

But Enid, not to appear rude, gave him the address.

"Then, you should go to Boston at once, senator," exclaimed Margaret in her direct and enthusiastic way.

"Oh, but—why, Margy, Senator Koppinger is so well known by everyone, his arrival in Boston would be the signal for the wildest speculation," suggested Enid, "and that might put the guilty ones on their guard."

"True, my dear," said her father, who was almost as guileless as Margaret, and no more than she had he observed the diplomatic sparring that was going on between the millionaire on the one hand and the Englishman and Enid on the other.

"A happy thought, Enid," replied Margaret.

But when the Boston special pulled out of Washington late that night there were two important passengers on board. One was John Koppinger and the other was Ralph Bolston.

Neither of them was aware of the other's presence, for Koppinger preceded the Englishman to the station by a few minutes, and was in his compartment with the door closed and locked when the other came. Nor did they meet on the train the next day, nor that afternoon when the special arrived. Being admonished by Enid's "happy thought," the senator remained in his snug quarters and had his meals served there. When the train came to a stop in the Boston station he waited fully five minutes before getting off. This he easily arranged with the porter. He had dodged the newspaper boys similarly on other occasions. Then he took a closed taxi and drove straight to No. — Charles street, coming to the quaint house, which sat back of and considerably above the street level, just after Bolston entered the door and it was closed behind him. The Englishman sent his taxi up the street a little way to wait for him; Koppinger did likewise. When the senator was admitted, after using the old-fashioned knocker vigorously, he saw Bolston standing in the hall. They glared at each other almost fiercely, but neither of them spoke. For full a half minute it was a duel between two pairs of eyes and two determined natures. Nor would a blast from Gabriel's trumpet have moved either of them, nor caused them to speak, nor even to blink an angry eye.

The intense spell was broken by the appearance of an elderly man whom the equally elderly looking maid that opened the door had gone to fetch from the upper floor. He wore an old pair of carpet slippers and was in very light and apparently very cheap attire. Pushing by Bolston and backing up against the dingy wall, he looked at Koppinger and then at the Englishman, who continued their fixed gaze, neither of them deigning to notice him, until he said, in a feeble voice :

"Won't you step into the room, gentlemen?" Then they bowed and passed through a half-open doorway which the old

man tried to make larger by pushing unsuccessfully at the paneled obstruction. It would not slide, for age, dust and rust had afflicted its grooves.

Inside the close and stuffy room, whose windows were tightly closed, as were also the long brown weather-beaten blinds outside, the old man motioned the two strangers to seats. By this time they both seemed to realize the ridiculousness of their attitude toward each other. Bolston broke the silence:

"Proceed, senator. I presume we are here on the same errand."

"Our spare room is for rent, gentlemen, but it is quite small," said the old man. "Maybe two could manage to get along in it somehow."

"At what price?" asked Koppinger.

"We get two fifty a week for one person," he replied. "For two we would want three fifty, if that is not too much."

"We will take it for a week," said Koppinger, and he paid the amount in advance.

The old man took the money with a grateful obeisance, turning so as to allow the dim light that fell into the room from the hall to strike the silver pieces in his hand, and he clinked the coins together as he examined them, in true New England fashion.

"I will have Matilda put the room in order if you will excuse me," he said, "and she will come to show you the bathroom and about the water."

When he had quit the room and was gone up the creaky stairway at the rear of the lower hall, Bolston spoke:

"A queer place, senator, to find the one we are looking for."

"Are you sure about the number?" asked Koppinger. They produced the cards upon which Enid had written the night before. There could be no mistake, at least on their part; the number was the same on each. Besides, they had come separ-

ately to the place, neither knowing the other to be in Boston. It was plain enough to the Englishman that the millionaire was as greatly puzzled as he—apparently so—and while they waited in silence he half persuaded himself that, after all, perhaps he had misjudged the senator.

A slight noise on the stairway and the rustling of starched skirts in the hall announced the approach of "Matilda," and when that person appeared in the doorway, her hand shading her eyes as she peered through the darkness of the room at the strangers, they rose and bowed politely.

Men who have been bred and trained to the ceremonious ways of society seldom neglect its conventional requirements. It was meet, under present circumstances, that they should show due respect in the presence of a woman, though she might turn out to be a mere scullion, rather than that they should feel the necessity of chiding themselves afterward for having failed to do so in the presence of Cornelius Twain's venerable aunt. Nor had Scotland Yard manners, in the Englishman's case, nor agrarian politics in Koppinger's had the effect of blunting their understanding of the ordinary civilities of life.

"We will not go up just now, madam," said Koppinger, in reply to her statement that the room was ready. "We may have some business in the city first. Has the room been occupied recently?"

"Yes, sir."

"We are not so very particular about it," he continued, "but by whom?"

"He was a fine man, sir, and called me aunt Matilda, I don't know why, because I haven't any nevvys, but I didn't care; he pays double."

"Had he been here before the last time?" inquired Bolston.

"Yes, sir; he's been here every spring these last four years,

and stays a week, sometimes more, and then he pays for two weeks if it isn't quite. I hope you'll like the room."

"Do you know where he comes from?" asked Koppinger.

"Down Washington way somewhere. He's something big in the Government, I guess, as some of his letters don't have stamps. They say "free" on the outside."

"And does he know anyone in the house here besides you?"

"Just my brother, David Hollister, that's all. We've lived here fifty years comin' fifty-one in December—no one else but them that rents the room and Sam and Julie, the help."

"You will pardon us for asking about your roomers, madam. Please show us up," said Koppinger.

"I'll call Sam, that's the colored man, to take your things." Then she hurried away.

"Sam," said Bolston, after handing him a silver dollar when they were in the room, "I hope we shan't give you any more trouble than the last roomer did."

"Deed it ain't no trouble no how, ef you please. He was spotty wid 'is money, too."

"Sporty?" repeated Koppinger.

"Yes, sah, just like you all, an' he talk fine about 'is sweet-he'a't an' 'is mammy an' daddy an' Miss 'Tilda, an' lots ob fokes wat he know'd. I reckon dat man was mighty good an' amount to sumpin in dis wicked worl', case he cry and take on 'korridgble like wen he git 'is sweethea't lettah dat cum eb'ry mo'nin'; an' he stay up all night and walk de flo' like he wait fo' de nex' one."

The professional novelist would find in the foregoing quite enough material with which to complete his story, for there was much in it to suggest darkness and mystery. Yet, I must see only through the eyes of John Koppinger and Ralph Bolston, and relate what they thought about it.

So, when Sam was gone the "new roomers" took council;

they were greatly nonplused. There could be no doubt —upon this they were agreed—that the three occupants of the Charles street house had told the truth. Twain had been in the habit of coming here, but not for the purpose of seeing his aunt. Beyond these incontrovertible facts his two anxious friends would not go at present.

But in what terms should this information be conveyed to Enid Grey? She would be eager to learn from Bolston's own lips the result of his investigations. The truth must be told. Thus Bolston mused.

"We will go over the matter on the train," said Koppinger, as if he were reading the Englishman's very thoughts. Then he looked at his watch. "Five hours yet. Dismiss the taxis, Mr. Bolston; you may go upon the streets without the hazard of being recognized. We can remain here until train time and then walk to the station a roundabout way. I know the city. Get a few sandwiches while you are out." Koppinger was a methodical man, and abhorred hunger.

Soon after Bolston left the house, "Matilda" rapped at the door. She came with the letter that Enid had written. It was unopened. "I didn't want to break it, sir, for I am not his real aunt, and there is a law for them that opens other's letters."

"Was the gentleman that had this room in good health, madam?" Koppinger asked.

"Fine health, sir, and in good spirits. He laughed beautiful like, and talked with us. At night he walked the floor a good deal and seemed to be making speeches all to himself. I reckon he was getting ready for what he had to do for the Government, maybe."

En route next day Koppinger insisted that Bolston should see Miss Grey as soon as they arrived.

"She knows that you went to Boston and will expect an

immediate report," said he, without looking up from the magazine whose pages he was aimlessly turning.

The Englishman made no reply just then, for he did not quite like Koppinger's positive way of saying that Miss Grey knew in advance of his intention. Besides, how did Koppinger know? He could not have heard what he said to her in the lowest possible tone, at the moment that Margaret Holt was indulging in an outburst of laughter and the others were talking. Had the millionaire guessed the truth? If so, then there must be a hidden meaning in his cool assumption of a secret understanding between them, which, indeed there was, but it was no business of John Koppinger's. Besides, Koppinger had not explained to Bolston nor anyone else why it was that he took upon himself the task of finding Senator Twain's aunt, leaving Washington hastily and secretly for that purpose.

"Did Miss Grey tell you, senator?" asked the Englishman. He knew, of course, that she did not tell him, as he had requested her to say nothing about it; yet there seemed no better way of parrying the millionaire's gentle thrust than by putting him on the defensive.

"Oh, not at all," he replied quickly. "I supposed that was generally understood when you asked for the Charles street number."

"Oh, of course," replied the Englishman. "I had forgotten about that."

And both were lying beautifully, the one to the other, even as distinguished diplomatists might have done under stress of like circumstances.

CHAPTER VIII

BANNISTER AT BLUE RIDGE

When they arrived in Washington each took his separate way, after Bolston had extracted a promise from Koppinger that the Boston episode should not be mentioned to anyone outside the Grey family. The senator went to the Capitol, direct from the great Union station which the Government donated to the pauper railroads running to the Capital city. He walked leisurely across the park, and entering the Senate chamber took his seat among his colleagues with an air of unconcern and repose that completely masked the unusual emotions stirring in his breast. Several senators came to inquire if there were any news concerning Twain. The close personal relations so long existing between them gave the millionaire statesman especial prominence as the medium through whom information on the subject was expected, and the secret service officials who were working on the case came to him regularly for advice. Dick Bostwick, the famous head of detectives, met with him for consultation almost every day for that purpose.

"His whereabouts are still unknown," was Koppinger's guarded reply to his colleagues. Until now his stereotyped answer had been: "No new developments."

Next day, after the Senate convened, Baxter came along and standing in the lower aisle leaned with his elbows on

the outer ledge of Koppinger's desk, which the guides will tell you was the one used by Daniel Webster long ago; and you will look at it with patriotic emotion expanding your American breast, remembering the inscription you have read, perhaps, on the granite statue in Central Park, New York: "Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable." Then you will visit the great, the beautiful Congressional Library building and ask for Webster's famous speech in reply to Hayne, for in the eager routine of your home life you have not thought to read it, though it may be found in your own bookcase.

Well, this brought Baxter's and Koppinger's heads close together, physically at least.

"Any developments?" asked Baxter.

"Can you take luncheon with me in my committee-room at one?" responded Koppinger, turning and looking at the big clock over the main entrance to the chamber. The ominous black hands of the time-piece indicated twelve forty. Nor had these been disturbed since the closing hours of the last session, when, as frequently happens, they were turned back by the use of a long staff in the hands of the head doorkeeper, so that the Senate might delude itself with the belief that the final "legislative day" had not expired. This is only one of the methods of killing time in the Senate. The old clock was "right" today, and Baxter nodded his head.

When two senators take luncheon together in a committee-room it amounts to a miniature executive session, and what is said on such occasions is not for the wide world to know, any more than are the proceedings of a real secret session of the Senate; although, even unto the present day, the mysterious "leak" in the big chamber has not been located, and never will be; for which the Press Gallery will continue to raise its eyes to Heaven with feelings of gratitude deeper and more fervent

even than those aroused over the annual turkey and cranberry sauce in November. To repeat: committee-room luncheons "for two" are of a very confidential nature, and no senator participating in one of them will ever tell what was said, from bluepoints to demi tasse.

No such inviolableness is maintained even at the White House, where conferences, involving the fate of nations sometimes, are not spoken of forever after by the parties to them, the newspaper boys being obliged to report them in the third person, using the "it is said," "it is reported," and "one close to the President is credited with saying," etc. Hence the importance attached to the choosing of a secretary to the President who has a fine, artistic as well as "safe and sane" literary style.

A speedy taxicab carried the Englishman from the station to Grey's private room in "The Record" building. The editor, having examined a time table, was expecting him, for he was sure it would be unnecessary for Bolston to spend many hours in Boston in finding Senator Twain's aunt. Imagine his surprise, then, on learning that no such person existed, so far as had been ascertained.

"Enid must not be told," said the editor, very much disturbed by Bolston's report. "It would undo her completely."

"You know best as to that, my friend," replied the Englishman, "yet she is the one most deeply interested in knowing the truth."

"It would shake her faith in him, I fear, and that would break her heart."

"But she knows that I went to Boston and will expect me to tell her. Not to do so would excite suspicion—a lack of confidence in me even, and in you also, I fear, for your daughter understands, of course, that there are no secrets between you and me."

The editor paced the floor of his sanctum for a few moments in silence. Then he touched a bell-button.

"Ask Mr. Smith," said he, when the messenger came, "to give you the 'copy' I handed him awhile ago—the article marked 'must' in blue—and fetch it to me. There," he exclaimed when the "copy" was brought to him and he had put it in a little drawer in his desk, "you may sleep for awhile, but not too soundly, for I'll have to use you before long."

Then, turning to Bolston, he said: "In that article I have charged the mongering System with criminal responsibility for the abduction of Cornelius Twain. I have yielded to your advice, so often given, not to make such an accusation, but damn their pachydermatous hides, Bolston, I believe I am right about it. As soon as you got away I couldn't desist longer, so I just lifted up a few square inches of their thick cuticle and put some salt and vinegar under it. The article would have been in tomorrow's 'Record.' Under the circumstances it will keep."

In the absence of the Englishman the man Grey had overcome the circumspect editor of that name and was upon the point of launching "The Record" in the scarlatiniform sea of journalism, where, thereafter, it must perforce build its circulation on the slimsy foundation of sensationalism, thus inviting the approval of a clientele of thoughtless people.

"I'm glad the Boston express didn't run off the track, Mr. Grey," remarked Bolston with a kindly smile.

"So am I, on your account."

"But, about the aunt?" inquired the Englishman.

"We are putting our summer home at Blue Ridge in order. It will be ready in a few days. Page Bannister is coming to visit us. You must come also. By then we can decide what is best to do. Enid is now at Holtleigh with Margaret. Poor child! My heart bleeds for her." And he went over to the

open window and looked dejectedly out upon the hurrying throng on the heated sidewalks.

Ashhurst, the summer home of the Greys, reposed snugly in the midst of a great forest of chestnut trees on the west side of the Blue Ridge mountains, overlooking the panoramic and historic Cumberland Valley.

The house had been reconstructed and modernized out of a quaint two-story frame building with a profusion of gables and dormer windows, such as belonged to the architecture of the early half of the nineteenth century. During the Civil War it was the residence of a prominent Maryland family, consisting, after the war, of the mother and four daughters. The men that belonged there had been in the service on both sides of the fratricidal contest—and they never returned. Indeed, the house was divided against itself. One son, the youngest, was in the Union army; the father and two of the elder sons were fighting with the Confederates. One of these had remained at home for a time with his mother and four sisters to direct the negroes in the work of cultivating two or three hundred acres of fertile lands in the valley below. While Lee's army was passing northward through the valley toward Gettysburg the young man, who thus far had remained loyal to the Union cause, took the best horse in the stables, rode to a neighboring school house where the Stars and Stripes waved in the breeze from the top of a fine beechwood pole erected by the patriotic citizens for the previous Fourth of July celebration, and, cutting the halyard with his bowie knife, he severed the flag in twain, wrapped one half of it about his body and made a dash for the marching columns of the Confederacy, yelling as he went: "I'm a rebel from hell and am after the Yankees with fire!" His bones lie buried somewhere near Little Round Top, overlooked by the granite monuments of the Reunited States. Soon after the wild flight of this Hotspur into the

jaws of death, a Union officer came to the gabled house, from which he proceeded to observe the movements of the Confederate forces, reporting to General Hooker and the latter to General Halleck. At the close of the war the officer returned, for he had fallen in love with the belle of the Maryland hills, one of the four sisters, on the occasion of his first expedition. But that is another story.

Ashhurst was now a spacious, comfortable abode, with broad porches on three of its sides, a small garage and a luxuriant flower garden at the rear. Here the hummingbird came to suck the nectar of the blossoms and bathe in the sun's rays reflected from the mingled dark and light of his tremulous vesture. Cock robin, with vest of red and cutaway coat, strutted proudly on the well clipped lawn at the house front, turning his head ingeniously to catch the gnawing sound of the grubs in the grassroots; and below, in the thickets and brush-clumps of the deep ravines, the hermit thrush warbled his inimitable song. The place was in the midst of ideal surroundings.

A narrow roadway led up a steep hill, all astir with ferns, to another and broader highway that wound through the forest, skirting now and again the crumbling edges of rocky declivities which made one's head swim.

A three-mile run over this picturesque highway brought the traveler to Holtleigh, more magnificent, perhaps, than anything hitherto attempted in the way of summer residences. Nor shall I undertake to describe it; words refuse to tell of its exceeding splendor. I must content myself, therefore, with saying—and Holt minor told me himself—that it cost two and a half million of dollars. In these days of haste and waste, and according to our way of estimating the artistic, that is description a plenty! I should say, however, that Holtleigh was just over the line in Pennsylvania—the Mason and Dixon

line—as well as that which separates Maryland from the Keystone commonwealth.

It was here, then, at this unequalled palace, that Enid Grey was being entertained by Margaret Holt until such time as Ashhurst should be in readiness.

Across a deep gorge to the north, supported by a wide area of croquet and tennis grounds, there was an elaborate hotel, well patronized by summer visitors, among whom Captain Nicholas Mikleskoff, who, on account of his military bearing, his handsome, rugged face, no less than by reason of his distinguished lineage and his matrimonial aspirations, was quite the most leonine personage in the veranda parades—that is, when he suffered himself to mingle with the other guests. This happened all too seldom to be entirely satisfying to the minds of the marriageable maidens who bedecked themselves appropriately for such occasions and practiced their little coquetties with amazing results upon susceptible elderly gentlemen, but without the desired effect upon the titled Russian. Ambitious matrons who had daughters to exchange for distinction understood it, and looked reprovingly upon the frequent visits of the junior Holt and two or three boon companions with whom the Captain spent long hours in his quarters on the top floor, where the clicking of chips and the wild outbursts of laughter could be heard through the thin partitions of the summer resort too frequently far into the night. And it sometimes happened that Margaret Holt herself came in the family car with her brother or her mother, or both, to deposit the Captain at his hotel after he had made an evening call at superb Holteigh.

Still, the privilege of bestowing his name and the title of “countess” upon any young lady whose parents could be persuaded to exchange a few millions for an alliance with nobility could not be seriously denied to Nicholas Mikelskoff. It is

one of the hardships that belong to hereditary distinction to be at least suspected of designs of this nature. Yet, so long as young Holt insisted upon learning the numerous foreign games of chance with which the Captain was familiar, and so long as the Captain himself wished to take lessons in our national game of poker, he was not inclined to be disturbed by any gossip imputing to him an ulterior motive in his attentions to the multi-millionaire's daughter.

In the end, his efforts to teach and to learn the games appear to have been rewarded by several thousand dollars, enabling him to reestablish agreeable relations with his tailor and the haberdasher who were contributors to his necessities in darker days.

So, in due time, Page Bannister came to Ashhurst. Ralph Bolston arrived two days later. He was delayed on account of a pressing engagement with Dick Bostwick, who was just put in charge of the Government machinery now in motion for the recovery of the stolen senator. The great detective, first coming to me with the thread of a faint clew, I had sent to the Englishman, whom I knew to be young, alert, active and forceful; for what could be accomplished by me, who was considerably past the meridian of life, with the lethargy of an oriental sojourn in my sluggish blood, toward solving a problem that required quickness of thought and sprightliness of movement? Moreover, I was aware of the sorrowful fact that in Washington life there are none who are quite as helpless, even useless, none so painfully impotent in achieving results as those who, having once held influential station under the Government, find themselves, as private citizens, facing extraordinary duties; for it is here that the "political pull" is all powerful, and without it one is simply in the way. I had seen many pathetic instances in which former members of Congress had located at the Capital to practice their profession or to

engage in other business in order to eke out a livelihood, in the belief, no doubt, that their prospects would be enhanced in that, not so long ago, they were more or less distinguished officially; and I had seen almost as many complete failures. Wherefore I say unto my fellow "exes:" Be content with your lot as squeezed lemons, for statuary hall is already overcrowded with marble heroes.

Again, I could not imagine a situation that would admit of failure in the heroic purpose so apparent in Ralph Bolston's determined eyes when he came to consult me a few days back in regard to certain legal phases of the case and his own status as a rescuer of abducted statesmen. Under the influence of these reflections I was easily reconciled to the part, the only part for me in this strange national tragedy; I could merely advise and suggest, after asking many questions, thus demonstrating the force of the maxim, "old men for counsel, young men for war."

Moreover, I was at the great disadvantage of having been away several years, and in that time a complete revolution in business methods and in public affairs had taken place. All the great interests and industries, except agriculture, were now under one formidable control, and the Master Monger of them all had raised himself, by sheer force of relentless and imperious energy, to a position of lordly domination over millions of his fellow creatures, the institution of government itself falling helplessly under his heartless sway.

"Ah, yes," said Grey to me one day, "it is here, in the inviting atmosphere of the nation's Capital, no matter what party is in power, that the 'captains of industry' collaborate in the interest of statutory privilege. It is here, too, that the great Colossus of Finance and Trade—one foot on the lid of administration and the other on the stock market, his sombre right hand displayed as if gripping the coddled industries of the

east, his face turned in confident expectancy toward the bountiful west and the fruitful south, the better, perhaps, to observe his network of railroads gathering tribute for his vast coffers, already overflowing with spoil—it is here that the very ground quakes, until even the gold hoardings in the National Treasury are commoved, when this modern Croesus comes to town. And when he has talked plainly to the statesmen, lest they forget; when the Treasury is more deeply indebted to him than ever; when the kow-towing of sycophants and suppliants has ceased, and the kind of "prosperity" that he last prescribed, be it conservation or reciprocity, is supposed to have taken root, he will cross the wide ocean, and, mayhap, he will venture to spend some of the hard-earned dollars extracted from the sweat of a grateful people's brow in the purchase of works of the old masters; after which he will again receive the plaudits of the multitude, but now, forsooth, in recognition of his artistic taste! Thus it is that some of the most powerful of our 'self-made men' build their own monuments."

Have not I said elsewhere that Editor Grey was a man of rare imagination?

"I am in need of help," said Bostwick, when he came to me and I sent him to confer with the more active Englishman. "I fear the worst, for I have just succeeded in unearthing an important chain of ugly facts. For the present the matter must be treated in the strictest confidence. I know that you can be trusted. At the outset let me say that no senator is responsible for the unfortunate affair, not even Packenham, who is being terrifically censured, as you know. He is prostrated with remorse for the part he is charged with having taken in it. I have talked with him. Still, he knows nothing of what I am about to relate."

This exculpation of Packenham and of the body of which I had been a member pleased me; for it was the fashion to make

the gravest accusations against the American Senate, as it had been in the time of Julius Caesar and of Cneius Pompey to lay all the ills of the times at the door of the Roman Senate.

Yet, why blame the people for their lack of confidence in public men? Has not even our boasted system of "trial by jury" been practically superseded by one of accusation in the public prints?—by demagogic indictments drawn in heated imaginations and delivered from political rostrums?—from Rome to Chicago! "Yer guilty anny way," as the Irish justice remarked; "now procade to put in yer ividince, if ye have anny." Such is the new mode of judicature; such the onslaught upon the American Senate, because it refuses to be stampeded by clamor.

So, as I have said, Page Bannister and Ralph Bolston came to Ashhurst as the guests of the Greys. If Bostwick's discovery in regard to Andy Akers was entitled to credence it did not remove the conviction in the Englishman's analytical mind that John Koppinger knew more about the mystery than he was willing to tell; either that, or his interest was of another kind. But the Englishman kept his own counsel and assisted the Greys in entertaining the distinguished Altrocratic leader.

One evening, after a Lucullan feast at the Holts in honor of Bannister, Captain Mikleskoff ventured the opinion that, as a preliminary to unearthing the real culprits in the abduction, someone should be either hanged or guillotined.

"This," said he, "would flush the covey, as you say here, and send the rascals to cover in mortal fear. After that the authorities would have no trouble in putting their hands upon them."

Grey was inclined to agree with the Russian, but Bannister inquired if there was not the danger of sacrificing the life of an innocent person. This did not appeal to the Captain's un-American conscience, and he replied:

"The world is filled with worthless people, anyway."

"Shocking!" exclaimed Margaret. "Is that the custom in your country, Captain?"

"I must admit," he answered, as if to soften his previous remark, "that we go in for results, Miss Holt, thus maintaining the integrity of the Government."

"I fear the compensation is not enough," was her reply, as she looked appealingly, and, as Enid thought, admiringly at Page Bannister.

Bolston was wondering if, in pursuance of his policy of propitiation, the Captain would select his victim from the Farnum tribe, but he said nothing.

Bannister's short stay in the Blue Ridge mountains was enlivened by much sightseeing. He was greatly interested in the people, and Grey managed to bring him in contact with several of the homespun residents of the Cumberland Valley. On one occasion, as they were descending toward Waynesboro in the seven-passenger car, Mrs. Grey asked the driver to stop.

"Here comes good old Mr. Smyser," said she. "He is on his way to Ashhurst with a basket of fresh berries. We will take them in and save him climbing the hill. Good morning, Mr. Smyser."

"Howdy all?" inquired the sinewy, swarthy old resident. Smyser owned a few acres of land where his forebears had lived and died. He maintained a little orchard in which a variety of fruits were grown, and a duck pasture where he fattened the web-footed fowl on celery and sold them to the wealthy resorters of the Blue Ridges. He was also the local philosopher of the Waynesboro region and always had the right of way in any political arguments that arose in the community. "It's right smart warm today," said he, wiping the beads of water from his bronzed forehead with a red bandanna.

"Shake hands with the next President, Mr. Smyser. This

is Mr. Bannister," said the editor, "and you've met Mrs. Grey, Miss Margaret Holt and my daughter Enid, of course, and this red-headed man here is Mr. Bolston, from London, but he's fast coming to be Americanized."

"I've hearn tell about him, sir, as how he's just cuttin' out that Roosian over to Andy Holt's. I hope he does. I ain't got no use fer them furriners that come here to take our party gals away."

And the ladies fairly screamed with laughter, for here was a piece of local gossip that not even the Greys nor the Holts had heard before now. By this time the Englishman's face was redder than his beard, and that was redder than his hair. Margaret, too, was blushing appropriately, but not to the extent of confirming the report, as Page Bannister, who was a close observer, was quite sure, and he was eyeing her intently. "Besides," he mused, "she is a pronounced blonde and has such Heaven-blue eyes, out of the same piece of sky, perhaps, that Bolston's were plucked; and blonde, blue-orbed persons are said to mate with those having dark hair and eyes." Bannister's own were brown.

"I'm mighty glad to meet you, Mr. Bannister," continued Smyser, "but I might as well tell you, sir, that I won't vote fer you nohow. Beain't you the one that's runnin' for the new party what's got that elevatin' name?" The Smysers were originally from Vermont, but came to Maryland many years ago. This one was proficient in the vernacular of both these states, and knew the Pennsylvania dialect also.

Bannister nodded his head and answered smilingly: "I admire your frankness, Mr. Smyser; hold to your political beliefs, whatever they may be."

"Yes, sir; I'm right set. There ain't nothing wrong with the country, sir; it's the politicians that's to blame. All they want is to get in, and there ain't much difference in men. Mr.

Grey's paper has got it about right, sir. It says things should be allowed to simmer along without bilin' over."

Bolston, whose face was now less red than his hair, looked at Grey and smiled. He was thinking of the peppery article that was in the cold storage drawer of the editor's desk.

"I agree with Mr. Grey's paper in the main, Mr. Smyser," said Bannister, "but this is a growing country and politics must be made to keep up with it."

"I want to know!" exclaimed Smyser. "Well, sir, the country'll have to go some to keep out of their way, believe me. Senator Koppinger made a speech up here last fall and said so."

Bolston looked at Enid, but her gaze was fixed listlessly on some far away object, and she seemed not to hear.

"But, sir, you've got a good-looking noodle on your shoulders," Smyser went on, "and there's knobs on it. I reckon if them trusts struck it they'd slide off and git themselves hurt. Maybe you're all right, Mr. Bannister. I'll read what Grey says and govern myself accordingly."

CHAPTER IX

UNFOUNDED SUSPICION

Now, if all the characters in this chronicle, particularly those we have met in the luxurious seven-passenger car as it speeded among the Blue Ridges on that fine June morning, when old man Smyser disposed of his berries, had been of one mind in regard to the momentous problem around which this tale is being woven, they would be of no use whatever to the novelist. But for the very great disparity that exists in the view points of men and women; if there were no disagreements, no strifes, no contentions among the mortals of earth, the many good people who now feel the call to indulge in fiction-making might have no better occupation than that of proving the millennium a failure. And, with a good healthy millennium at hand, there would be no need of novels, perhaps, particularly of political novels.

But at the time of which I write we were far, very far from the millennium. Indeed, mankind was now more widely at variance in its beliefs and disbeliefs than ever before, and, paradoxical as it may seem, it is doubtful if at any period in the world's history had there ever been so little hunger and want. Teeming Nature had not faltered in its prolific bountifulness. There was neither famine nor plague, and, so far as wars were concerned, all Christendom was at peace, one nation with another.

Yet, the land was filled with discord. Personal animosities and petty bickerings prevailed in every avenue of life. Men were gripping at one another's throats in the market places; women tore their sisters' reputations to shreds in the home sanctuaries. There were few exceptions to the rule, and even these exceptional cases were vanishing before the resistless tide of excessive endeavor that was sweeping everything before it.

And all for what? For temporary possession of advantage and of power, which, being attained, were not enjoyed, for as contention grew more tense the fruits of it became less permanent and more unstable.

The reason for these strange conditions, as has been suggested, took rise in selfishness, the ancient arch enemy of all humankind, for it is by no means new; it is only more acute and also more ferocious and wicked. Finally, I fear, when our intense struggle for individual supremacy, under the mastery of money, comes to divide the multitude into many warring factions, if indeed that day is not already here; when, specifically in the realm of politics, it comes to pass that, as a remedy against this money evil, we shall be called out to cast our ballots in order to determine our daily course of action, even to the kind of food our neighbors shall eat or the raiment they shall wear, and a great people, once organized into adhesive units for mutual helpfulness and national protection, are rended into disorganized mobs—thus weakened and “reformed” into scattered and impotent particles, under the self-constituted leadership of talebearers and mischief makers, the great tyrant hand aforementioned, and now waiting its opportunity, will reach out and gather in the wasting spoils.

But this is preaching, always a poor instrument against impending disaster—a useless remedy in the cure of a diseased body politic, once the deadly germ of greed, abetted by antagonism and hatred, has entered therein.

Not even the complimentary allusion of old man Smyser to the conservative course of "The Morning Record" had served to stem the torrent of wrath that was now coursing through the mind of Arthur Grey, for the more he talked with Page Bannister on the issues of the pending Presidential campaign the more certain his conviction that he had made a mistake in withholding that editorial charging "the Monger System" with direct responsibility for the abduction of Senator Twain.

Yielding to Bolston's advice, he told his daughter of the result of the Englishman's investigations in Boston. Had she divined it? It must be so, for she was unmoved by her father's nervous and hesitating recital of the facts, and surprised him with this remark, intended, as he must have felt, to compassionate him :

"There may be some mistake about it, father ; we must continue to hope for the best."

Thereafter Enid betrayed no sign of disappointment, but thanked Bolston in optimistic words for his unsolicited effort, and assumed, as he thought, an air of unwonted relaxation, as if, in part at least, her deep anxiety had been allayed. This, coupled with Koppinger's peculiar actions, threw about the situation a new shade of mystery, which took on additional color when she asked the Englishman if the millionaire senator had accompanied him to Boston.

"Then you were aware he was to go that night," said Bolston, almost sharply, without replying directly to her question.

"No, but I had a note from him after he returned telling me—"

"Pardon me for my abrupt remark, Miss Grey. Yes, we went by the same train, but I did not know it until the senator arrived at the house in Charles street. We returned together. En route homeward the senator was kind enough to propose

that I should personally give you the particulars. Does his account coincide with my own?"

"Very closely," she replied, looking inquiringly into his face. "Except that Senator Koppinger expresses some doubt about the entire sincerity of those in the house with whom he talked."

Koppinger had expressed no such doubt to him, and Bolston could not resist a feeling of annoyance, not to call it by a stronger term, to learn from Miss Grey herself that his own efforts were disappointing to her. At least this was the meaning he read in her reply and her inquiring look. After a moment's hesitation he said:

"An afterthought of the senator's, perhaps, or he would have told me, I am sure. I will see him immediately on my return to Washington tomorrow."

Of one thing Bolston was now certain: John Koppinger's interest was neither altruistic nor Platonic. But he could not, he would not, believe that she, being engaged to Cornelius Twain, reciprocated the millionaire senator's feelings. It must be, therefore, the Englishman reasoned, that Koppinger's attachment antedated that of Twain's. Perhaps she was engaged to him before Twain came upon the scene. This thought aroused sinister doubts in Bolston's mind in regard to Koppinger's fidelity to his absent friend, and as he analyzed the incidents of the preceding week he could not resist the conclusion that Dick Bostwick, with all his astuteness in apprehending criminals, had been too hasty in his suspicions concerning Andy Akers. For the present, however, he would not permit himself to believe that Koppinger was particeps criminis to Twain's disappearance, nor that he was even cognizant of the means by which it had been accomplished, should it turn out that force had been used, as Grey verily believed. Nor would he go directly to the editor with his conjecture, much less to Miss Grey herself for confirmation of the fact, now firmly

fixed in his mind, that John Koppinger was in love with her, for that was unnecessary, and in time he was sure the whole truth would be revealed.

One evening, near the end of Page Bannister's stay at the Greys, a final dinner was given in his honor. Among the guests were Captain Mikleskoff, the fair, delightful and naïve Margaret, the spendthrift Stephen, his opulent father and his devoted and indulgent mother. Senator Koppinger was also invited, and Bolston secretly wondered at whose suggestion this was done; but, when Grey, having received a message from Koppinger, expressed his regret that urgent duties in the Senate precluded the millionaire bachelor from the feast, the Englishman, who aimed always to be just, even in his private opinions concerning those he could no longer trust, was almost upon the point of accusing himself of jealousy, at which thought he laughed outright.

"I wanted to bring the confirmed plutocrat and the proletarian leader together," said Grey, when he got Koppinger's telegram, "but Andrew Holt will be here instead of Koppinger to represent the country's moneybags and meet Bannister on neutral ground."

Margaret Holt was placed to the right of the Altrocratic leader when the guests assembled at the table, and she took the first opportunity to rally him anent old man Smyser's somewhat vitriolic allusions to the new party a few days before. Bannister smiled and said this was the land of free speech, and that the homespun philosopher and berry peddler was a man of honest and positive opinions.

"I fear that speech is too free in your country, Mr. Bannister," remarked the Russian. "Only yesterday I heard a gentleman of some distinction at the Capital make the statement publicly that it would be a good thing for the people if the

entire Senate were abducted, and there were those present who agreed with him."

"Such fools should be deprived of the privilege of the ballot," said Holt.

"Oh, no," replied Bannister. "They are necessary evils under our system of democracy. That kind of talk ought really to move men of wisdom to do their duty at the polls."

"The Captain would send these horrible examples into exile," exclaimed Margaret with a merry laugh.

"Siberia wouldn't be big enough to hold them all, together with the consolidators," suggested Grey.

"And the scarlet press, too, from which the multitude get their dangerous views," remarked Bolston, who, since coming to Ashhurst, had been much disturbed by Grey's radical outbursts; he feared an early change in the policy of "The Morning Record." Not that he would shield "the Monger System," but rather that he would save his friend the editor from what might prove to be an ill-advised step at a most critical moment.

Nor did the Russian Captain invite further expressions from the great Altrocrat, with whom the adorable Margaret seemed inclined to agree, sitting there at his side and giving undivided attention to all Page Bannister was saying. Indeed, the Captain showed no little impatience when, soon after the guests arose from the dinner table, Margaret and Bannister, comfortably ensconced on a wicker settee just large enough for two persons and occupying a retired nook on the great porch, seemed never to break off their wooing—for in the Russian's estimation it was nothing less than that.

What they were saying he was unable to hear, even had he been rude enough to have listened, for Mrs. Holt, who adored foreigners on account of what she called their exquisite manners, had captured the Russian and was plying him with a rapid fire of questions concerning the Europeans and their

customs. So persistent was she in holding his distracted attention he was convinced she, too, was in the conspiracy to deprive him of Margaret's society. He had the good fortune, however, to be carried to his hotel in the Holt auto that evening, and to occupy a seat in the tonneau beside his inamorata, whispering his devotion into her ear and sighing like a furnace. How he hoped she would speak of her tête-a-tête with the distinguished Bannister and rave about his classical features, for well he knew the meaning of a woman's praise of a rival suitor. But she did not give him even this satisfaction, and, so intent upon the subject was he, after a short silence he ventured some compliments of his own that she might be led into an expression concerning him.

"A very clever man, Captain, I grant you," was the full extent of her comment—the "I grant you" in a tone of acquiescence that was almost chilling, leaving the smitten alien to infer that, had he spoken of Bannister as a political mountebank or a western stage robber, she would have agreed with him entirely.

And all the while Margaret Holt was measuring the decorated Russian at her side by the splendid American who so charmed her with his superior qualities during the few short minutes she was permitted to be with him alone at Ashhurst. Even this much, but for night's protecting veil, were readable in the heightened coloring of her beautiful face and the newly-awakened light in her glorious eyes. She was not thinking of Captain Nicholas Mikleskoff.

From Ashhurst, after a week's freedom from the importunities of politicians and platform builders, Page Bannister went direct to his home in the west. Here he awaited the action of the Altrocratic convention, the first national gathering of the new party, by which he was duly nominated for the Presidency. It was a notable assemblage, made up from the

dissatisfied elements of the two old parties, which were now combined in a common cause under the banner of Conservatism—a title that suggested political asylum for the “captains of industry,” the “advance agents of prosperity” and the promoters of financial and industrial interests generally.

On the other hand, if I may go back to an early incident in Altrocratic annals, Page Bannister and his immediate advisers, in choosing a name for the new party, struck the keynote of popular sentiment, and it was soon to be heard throughout all ruraldom. Failing to find in any of the dictionaries or encyclopedias a word that expressed the embodied principles in which they believed, they coined a term for the occasion. In furtherance of their quest for a ringing title by which to emphasize their altruistic purpose, and having several university professors among their adherents, the task was imposed upon the scholars of the new party. After the professors agreed upon the term “Altrocratic,” Bannister was called in to give his approval. He was a cautious man, and knew with what zeal and enthusiasm intense partisans, roused by attractive theories, sometimes push their cause; and there was so much in the country’s politics of the unpractical kind, so many catchy phrases and high-sounding resolves, that he asked the text-book statesmen for a few days time in which to consider their decision, promising to pass on the question long before the date of the convention, which was more than six months away when this happened.

Bannister, far-sighted as well as cautious, at once wrote to his friend Grey, who was then in Nagasaki, Japan, told him of the professors’ etymological endeavor and asked for his opinion.

“Admirable! Admirable!” wrote the editor, whose reply to Bannister’s letter I was permitted to read on our way across the Pacific. “With that title for your new party,” the letter

continued, "there will be no need of a platform. Literally, the whole story is told in a single word. An Altrocrat, I take it, is one who puts love of country and the good of his fellow man above party and personal gain. Such is the political application of the word."

I was about to remark at this point that altruism and politics were opposing forces, and like oil and water would not mingle, but the next sentence in the letter made this unnecessary:

"Altruism is the positive and politics the negative. By friction—that is by agitation—the two may be brought into harmony. The ancients believed that a body having the quality of attraction was possessed of a soul. Altruism—having regard for the well being or best interest of others—has the force of attraction. It is of divine origin; it has a soul. Science tells us that all bodies are susceptible of electrical excitement. Why not experiment with the institution of politics, in the hope of imparting to it the positive or spiritual qualities of which it is now wholly devoid? I have some doubt, my dear Bannister, about trusting too far to the average scholastic mind in matters of a strictly practical nature, for I have known so many men just out of the universities and colleges who were gone daft in theory; yet, in the matter of diction, of word construction, we must admit their superiority. Yes, the word Altrocrat has my complete approval for the purpose which you intend to use it. A Democrat could easily be a member of either of the old political organizations if there were nothing better for him to follow, for the principles of the two parties were alike before they combined. Happily, he may now find the complete expression of his sentiments within the Altrocratic party, whose theory is the very groundwork of true democracy under a republican form of government. A party postulated upon the precarious doctrine that greed and selfishness shall be the deter-

mining forces is a party of Autocracy. The party which in practice puts man before the dollar and keeps him there is necessarily the party of Altrocracy. The people will not at once comprehend the meaning of the new word, but when they do it will sink into their consciences. It has substance, and will grow upon the mind. I may refer to you as a Plutocrat and you to me as a Populist or an Insurgent. These terms are more or less offensive, and, when loosely applied by or to those of opposite political opinions, give rise to feelings of retaliation. If you refer to me as an Altrocrat I accept the appellation as a badge of honor. The word conveys a distinction of dignity; it is uplifting, ennobling. By its use as a party title it will have a decided tendency to lift politics out of the mire. No one could proudly boast that he was not an Altrocrat; it would reflect credit upon any man to own that he was one."

But all this was said months before Cornelius Twain disappeared. Yet, it served to reassure Page Bannister. He had great confidence in Grey, conceded to be the leading editor of the country. "With such thoughtful men as he proclaiming for the adaptability of the new word," said Bannister to me, "it will be difficult, I imagine, for the humorists and cartoonists to turn it to ridicule. They may even abandon the elephant and the donkey, whose grotesque counterparts in the funny papers and colored supplements are training young America toward flippancy instead of philosophy."

And, now, how the long, dull hours of these flagging summer days were dragging by at Ashhurst! Poor Enid Grey, so close to being misjudged by Ralph Bolston, though she did not even suspect it, was nursing her unspeakable grief in her silent chamber, where, far into the night time, long after the lights in the windows of the Blue Ridge hotel across the gorge went out, and darkness had spread its pall over the quiet scene,

she sat peering through the open lattice into the wild spaces of the mountainside, with no sound but the echoing notes of the whippoorwill or the occasional flutter of the nighthawk's wing to wake her from sad reverie. Could Bolston have seen her thus, although he might have gone on indulging misgivings in regard to John Koppinger, no longer would he include Enid Grey in his distrustful speculations. It is doubtful, indeed, if he did include her, except as her fate is involved in all these pages. It was her welfare that he was interested in, for he was devoting himself unselfishly to the unravelling of a mystery the end of which deeply concerned a warm and worthy friend who had fallen into unusual misfortune, and was not here to fend against those who would destroy him. He hoped John Koppinger was not one of these. If it should turn out that he was, then the Englishman had already discovered the bachelor senator's purpose, and he conceived it his duty, as he would have had Twain do also unto him, to prevent the consummation of an object so perfidious. Was not this a motive that entitled him to high rank among altruists? But there are too many who will say it was only the Scotland Yard instinct.

CHAPTER X

THE MYSTERY IS INTENSIFIED

The day following Bolston's return from Ashhurst he met Captain Mikleskoff at the Cosmopolitan Club, where a member was telling them in a whisper of Dick Bostwick's suspicions in regard to Andy Akers' connection with the Twain abduction, the story being known to but very few. Most of the club members knew Akers, on account of his good judgment of horses. Doubtless, they had heard also of Eva Farnum.

"It isn't at all likely they will hang him or send him into immediate exile," said the Englishman, smilingly.

"No," replied the Captain, for whom the remark was intended. "The courts will dilly dally, and hysterical women will send flowers to him. Unlike criminals in your own country, Akers will be a hero here."

"And Mrs. Farnum's friends will testify to his good character," added Bolston, laughing dryly.

But even this did not seem to disturb the stoical, fatalistic Russian.

Now, there were two important appointments which Bolston had decided upon, entirely on his own account, for as yet the persons whom he meant to see were not aware of his intentions. One was with Senator John Koppinger, his whilom companion on the return trip from Boston; the other with the husband of Eva Farnum. Very few of her acquaintances knew her by any other name, and Akers made no objection.

When the Englishman called at the senator's committee rooms in the elaborate office building of the Capitol he was told that Koppinger was in New York. The millionaire statesman was in the habit of going to the metropolis half a dozen times a year. He was a director of several corporations whose affairs are supposed to be passed upon quite regularly by boards of directors gathered about long tables in richly appointed quarters either in Jersey City or in Newark, in compliance with the laws of New Jersey, under which, for reasons quite familiar to my readers, a vast number of these concerns have been organized. For the sake of convenience, the meetings of these boards are arranged so that the members of them, those who are on several or many boards, may attend all or most of the sittings the same day. Usually, the meetings are of short duration, the directors remaining only to receive their checks for twenty-five, or fifty, or one hundred dollars for each meeting, according to the size and importance of the corporation. These payments are for attendance, not for services, which are readily performed by low-salaried clerks, under the president or chairman of the board, who receives a fabulous sum for his Napoleonic talents. At the close of their arduous labors, after attending from one to a dozen board meetings and drawing their pay, the directors hasten to their homes in New York:—they have been away a whole day! And, to the average New Yorker, even New Jersey is a long ways off.

I once met a New Yorker on a west-bound train just as we crossed the line between North Dakota and Montana, and rarely has it been my fate ever to have met a more miserable man. "For God's sake!" he cried, addressing the porter, "don't tell me how many million miles I am away from home, but bring me something to drink so that I may forget it!" Then, turning to me, he asked: "Is there no end to this —

road? I never expect to see my family again." He was greatly distressed; and while I have tried to convince myself that it was because no liquor could be had in North Dakota, as everyone knows, still I am bound to believe that he was serious, if not entirely sober, for he was one of the very few New Yorkers I had happened to meet so far away from home.

Well, Koppinger was attending a series of these meetings in Jersey City or Newark—and was therefore in New York. And so Bolston came away from the Capitol and sought Andy Akers at his dingy little office opposite the Pension building. Akers was out, and the colored janitor said he was to return directly; that he had just stepped into a room on the same floor "to see a ge'man." Bolston handed the janitor a quarter and asked him who "the ge'man" was.

"Ah doa'n' know, sah, but ah reckons he is Mistah Giddums wat cums heah mos' eb'ry day, sah.' This sable factotum, like the rest of his tribe, was skilled in the art of imparting desired information, under favorable financial conditions, with the "ah doa'n' know, sah," as a precautionary premise; so that, had Akers questioned him later, he might truthfully have answered: "Ah tole de ge'man ah doa'n' know, sah."

The Englishman entered Akers' office and sat down, saying to the janitor he would wait. Here he looked at the cheap print pictures of jockeys and famous horses tacked on to the narrow dirty walls, until his eyes fell upon a poster some two feet square, conspicuously displayed over a small oaken table near the single window. On the poster, which was of heavy cotton cloth, were the words in bold display: "One Hundred Thousand Dollars Reward for the Recovery of Cornelius Twain. Fifty Thousand Dollars for Information Leading to his Recovery. By order of the President. Calvin Clements, Secretary of State. Richard Bostwick, Chief of Detectives, Washington, D. C." These bills were not uncommon. They

might have been seen at this time on almost every board fence in the country. Just to the right of the poster, there was a campaign lithograph, a fac-simile of Senator John Koppinger!

The humorous coincidence caused the Englishman of Irish descent to smile broadly, and, but for footsteps in the hall just then, he might have laughed audibly. It was the janitor. He came to say that "Mistah Akus" would be there very soon.

Making a movement as if searching in his pocket for another quarter, Bolston asked one or two misleading questions, followed by this one:

"Whose is the picture over there, Sam?" It was Sam's comment he wanted.

"Dat, sah, is Senator Koppi'ger. He's a mighty good frien' of Mistah Akus. But ah reckons he ain't lak dat one dey kotch in der gerloon; he's mo' smaht, ah spect, sah."

"You mean Senator Twain?"

"Yes, sah—de one dat was shanghaied an' dey gib de money to fine. Ah reckons Mistah Akus gits dat money, sure. Mistah Koppi'ger been heah to see 'bout it."

Then Sam's eyes were lowered to the region of Bolston's pocket, but the Englishman did not respond, for that would have made the purpose of his questions altogether too apparent.

"Mistah Bostic, de chief, he been heah too, sah. Ah reckons you alls 'ill get 'im bimeby," the janitor was saying when he heard Akers coming leisurely along the hall.

The meeting between Bolston and Mrs. Farnum's husband was marked by an air of indifference that each must have known to be assumed by the other. The Englishman was at greater ease than Akers, for, by the use of the kind of diplomacy that goes far with the enfranchised African, he had derived more information from the janitor than he expected to get out of Andy Akers, all told. He knew of Bill Giddings through common report, which classed that gentleman with

the high rollers of the local stock market ; had heard his opinions quoted by those members of the club who admitted their familiarity with such intricacies of the Exchange as "puts and calls," "visible supply," "foreign demand," "domestic production" and the like. Giddings, besides a wide range of knowledge concerning politics and the crops, was also accepted as authority on the curb as to railroad shares—this, presumably, by reason of his close relations with Sam Ives, the trusted friend and political and business associate of Eph Fox, general counsel of the C. Q. D. Railroad, which was now coming out of the hands of a receiver, Ives, by the way, with a volume of apparent earnings that sent the stock to a prodigious height.

And Giddings was with Akers only a few minutes ago. To know all this in advance of his contemplated talk with him, and also that Koppinger was in the habit of consulting Akers, was to be doubly fortified for the parley. Still, the Englishman was at this disadvantage: If Akers was culpable, he alone knew it, no matter if the crime were directly his own or whether it belonged elsewhere, he being privy to it. This, above all, was what Bolston wished to find out, independently of Bostwick's line of investigation. In this light, it was all the more necessary that the former Scotland Yard man should proceed with extreme caution ; and yet he must come to the point in a way that would at once put all cavil to rout.

Bearing in mind Enid Grey's commission to find her lost lover—a duty, in Bolston's estimation, more sacred to him than if he were a sworn officer of the law ; remembering her appealing look—never to be forgotten—when she spoke to him on the subject that evening at her father's house, and putting behind him for the present all suspicion as to John Koppinger, his courage, always invincible, was now at high tension.

"Mr. Akers, I am a very close friend of Mr. Grey's and his family, as deeply interested as they in the recovery of Senator

Twain. It is far more important to us that he should return alive than that his persecutors, if there be such, should receive their legitimate reward at the hands of the law. This can be arranged—”

“Stop!” commanded Akers, raising his hand and pulling himself out of the deep old trap of a chair into which he had dropped on entering the room. Ambling to the door, which was somewhat ajar, he closed and locked it, shutting also the dusty transom window above. Then he came back to where Bolston had been sitting—for by this time the Englishman was on his feet. Looking his visitor straight in the eyes, Akers said:

“What if I should tell you, sir, that I am the one that planned and carried out the abduction?”

“I should say, in that case,” coolly replied the other, “that either you are a fool, or that, being guilty, your conscience was smiting you, and you had resolved to pay the penalty.”

“And you would be wrong on both propositions. Fool! Conscience! Bah!” And he snapped his fingers scornfully.

“Have you said as much to Chief Bostwick as to me?” asked Bolston.

“I have said nothing to Bostwick. He is a nice man, but all that is wanted by any officer that wears a star is to get a man into the toils—any man will do, guilty or not. They’re like some of the newspapers.”

“And you prefer that he should not know?”

“Prefer nothing! Tell him, if you like.”

“No, I will not mention it to any one,” replied the Englishman.

“Of one thing you may rest assured, sir—I will not run away. My office hours are from nine to four every day. From five to six I am at my farm near Chevy Chase. Evenings I am home.”

"At Mrs. Farnum's?"

"My wife's; yes, sir."

A gentle rap at the door put an end to further talk between them. Akers unlocked and opened it, and the Farnum, a sad expression on her haggard face, stepped into the room.

"My wife, Mr. Bolston," said Akers. Then, after the Englishman and Mrs. Akers had shaken hands: "Eva, will you part with the dapple grey? I think Mr. Bolston would like to have him."

"Not for any money, Andy; no, indeedy!"

"I would not deprive you of your pet, madam," said Bolston, gallantly.

That night, when Eva and Andy were preparing for bed, she asked him why the door was locked and the transom shut when she arrived at the office. Her curiosity was aroused, and she knew intuitively there was something more serious than mere horse talk going on before she came.

"Force of habit, my dear," he replied.

"And I saw Giddings leaving the building as I drove up," she added. "There is something in the wind, Andy, that you do not want me to know. Have I ever betrayed you?"

Always, when Akers was hard pressed for an answer, he would hang his head and say not a word. This was a never-failing sign of discomposure in him, and Eva knew it.

"I asked a question, Andy, and you do not reply. Have I ever betrayed you?"

"I'm so —— sleepy, Eva, I can't think. Forget it."

"Surely," she thought, as she lay there awake far into the morning, turning the problem in her mind, "it can't be so awfully serious, or he wouldn't sleep so soundly."

Still, Andy Akers was the greatest human enigma ever she had known. She verily believed that if he were condemned to die at a given hour of the morning, he would not allow the

matter to interfere with slumber the night before—not Akers—and on awaking, even while the hangman was at his cell door, he would turn to the priest praying by his side and ask about the condition of the grey gelding at the farm.

It must be that his last thoughts before falling asleep that night were of Sam Ives and Eph Fox, for when he awoke next morning he asked, drowsily:

“Where are they, Eva?”

“I am not sure—St. Louis, I think; Fox is, most always,” was her immediate answer.

Some marvelous psychological results have been noted in consequence of the appropinquity, for a period of several hours, of two healthy bodies such as Eva's and Andy's. One of these days someone whose specialty it is to deal with the abstruse question will discover that the three-quarter bed—too often it is even narrower than that—is responsible for a large percentage of the divorces that are being granted, particularly those for incompatibility of temper.

Eva Farnum, so called, and Andy Akers had not taken to the modern habit of separate repose; they slept in the same bed, as the matrimonial archives in the Recorder's office will show they had a perfect right to do. A very large bed, it was, too, almost square in its dimensions; but the mattress on which they slept was afflicted with *prolapsus medii*, by consequence of Eva's excessive avoirdupois and singleness during her widowhood.

So that Eva and Andy, being subject to restlessness, and the nights being warm, inviting slumber near the far edges, awoke mornings to find the inexorable law of gravity had tumbled them together into the trough of their broad and spineless couch. In this situation, as they slept peacefully on through the night, the imperceptible electrical currents of the separate bodies, after revivifying thousands, yea, millions of

depleted micro-organisms, were now flitting from one body to the other, thus equalizing the magnetic forces of both, Eva supplying those chemical ingredients of which Andy was deficient, and *vice versa*.

I may stop here to suggest that, perhaps, children born of such a bed are likely to be strong and hardy, possessed of good mental equipment, on the theory that a perfect physical basis is surely for normal brain development. But I will not embark on this broad sea of speculation; we are considering only the case of Mrs. Farnum and Andy Akers, who as yet were childless, and we are concerned just now particularly about the possibility of the transmission of thought *a priori* between man and wife whose bodies are mutually *en rapport, ut supra*; which bright idea, I am free to confess, came to me with unwonted spontaneity when Eva, just waking from the soundest of slumbers, gave immediate answer to her spouse's first morning question, which pertained to two dubious citizens who are to become prominent in this volume, and about whom neither Mrs. Farnum nor her loving husband had said a word for many days back and gone. "Where are they, Eva?" "I am not sure—St. Louis, I think. Fox is, most always." Whom else could Andy have had in mind when he awoke? And, but for the stimulating effects of the condition of appropinquity surrounding Eva and Andy at that moment, how otherwise could she have known that he was referring to the Honorable Samuel Ives, whom Akers detested above all men, and the Honorable Ephraim Fox, about whom personally he cared not a fig, except in respect of Fox as a possible contributor to future bad fortune for Ives?

At the breakfast table, an hour later, the probable whereabouts, as well as the present state of mind and financial resources of the distinguished C. Q. D. lawyer and his lobbyist friend, were discussed more at length. Akers was aware of

the fact that his wife possessed an itching palm. He knew also that as a girl, the daughter of respectable Boston parents, who gave her a good education, she had been courted assiduously for a time by Eph Fox. It was not for him to inquire into the secret of Fox's change in sentiment and his connivance at her subsequent marriage to Ben Farnum, who was a worthless sort of chap that followed the races as a "booky." What interested him now was whether Eva, still buxom and gay, would be able to exert, with due precaution for his own recently-acquired rights, something of her old-time influence over the railroad attorney. Moralizing thus, he casually remarked:

"You are an old friend of Eph's and wouldn't object to going with me to St. Louis, would you?"

"Delighted!" she exclaimed, her face glowing with sudden animation.

"I must know everything that he says to you, of course."

"Oh, Andy! Surely you do not already distrust me."

"Purely a matter of business, Eva," said he.

"It is sweet of you to put it that way. Yes, I will tell you everything, Andy, and gladly."

So it was arranged that they would leave for the Mississippi metropolis the next day; and the first thing Akers did was to find Bolston and tell him of his intended trip to the west, and where he could be found if wanted. He wasn't "running away." But he said nothing about the nature of his business in St. Louis.

By this time Senator Koppinger was back from New York. Intent on going forward with his self-assumed task of penetrating the mystery now revolving about John Koppinger's peculiar conduct, Bolston sought an early interview with that gentleman. Meeting him casually at the club, he made known his purpose, and the two went to a private room on the upper floor of the building. Koppinger himself coolly locked the

door when they were inside, as if it were he who had business with the Englishman, and before the latter could say anything the senator began :

"Your close relations with the Greys entitles you to an explanation from me, Mr. Bolston." Then he referred to the note sent by him to Miss Grey on his return from Boston, for he knew of the Englishman's and Bannister's sojourn at Ashurst (the papers had recounted that incident with much speculation as to its significance), and must have guessed that Bolston discussed the subject of his Boston investigations with Mr. Grey and his daughter, as, indeed, Koppinger himself had requested him to do in respect of Enid.

"My sending the note," he continued, "was prompted by a desire not to alarm Miss Grey. After leaving you it occurred to me that it would soften the blow if I expressed a doubt about the entire truthfulness of the occupants of the Charles street house. Furthermore, on my return I talked with Senator Twain's confidential secretary in regard to the old aunt—not the pseudo aunt, but the real one—for he has an aunt in Boston; I have seen a letter from her to her unfortunate nephew, written since we were there. She does not live in Charles street, but in Cambridge."

This straightforward recital by Koppinger restored him, in part at least, in Bolston's confidence, and the Englishman secretly hoped that before the interview was over the restoration would be complete and lasting; but it was not, for at the end he still believed John Koppinger's interest in Enid Grey was more than a friendly interest.

"And now," continued the senator, "I will give you some family history, with the understanding that it is not to be repeated to anyone, for obvious reasons." Bolston nodded his head. "Above all, the Greys must not know it. About ten years ago a cousin of Senator Twain's, a beautiful girl, the

daughter of the Cambridge aunt, met with a reverse in a love affair. It was supposed she was engaged to a promising young attorney, and that for reasons which were said to involve her integrity he broke with her. Current gossip imputed dishonorable conduct to him. In her desperation she married a man she did not love. About a year ago she divorced him through the Reno process and soon afterward remarried. Her home is here in Washington, where she is known as Mrs. Farnum. Her present husband is a man of the name of Akers."

"I have heard of him; indeed, I have met him," interrupted the Englishman; "also his wife."

Koppinger gave him a quizzical look, and then went on: "Having told you this much, I ought to add that the mother renounced her daughter and has never forgiven her. Twain's parents being dead, he appears to have centered his affections upon his Cambridge relative and to have tried to bring about a reconciliation between them. The mother has remained obdurate, and when the girl married Akers, Twain ceased his efforts, continuing, however, his visits to Cambridge. All this was confided to me by Twain himself, who during the past few years has been much cast down, for he has—or had—a most sensitive nature and was jealously vain of his family's good name."

"You say had, senator; do you believe Twain to be dead?" asked the Englishman.

"I have no belief about it," answered Koppinger.

"You know Akers?" said Bolston, with an inflection that could have been interpreted as being either a remark or an interrogation, for it was both, and it had the desired effect.

"Y-yes," replied Koppinger. Then, after a considerable pause: "He has done some political work for me."

Why this hesitating admission? thought Bolston. And in truth it was not as frank and straightforward as the rest of

Koppinger's statement. Still, it may be that he was not disposed to boast of his acquaintance with Mrs. Farnum's husband. Could there be another reason? Or were Bolston's apprehensions the fruit of fantasy?

Then the Englishman, thanking Koppinger for the mark of confidence in giving him the details of Mrs. Farnum's "romance," came away. If he had made any progress with John Koppinger and Andy Akers, it was in unexpected directions; nor had Koppinger, by any word or action, betrayed himself. As for Akers, Bolston was quite sure that he had not admitted his complicity in the crime to anyone else. This was strongly evidenced in Akers' closing of the door and the transom before admitting it to him, and in his suddenly changing the subject when his wife came. And yet, why had he thrown himself upon the Englishman's mercy? Surely, he could not thus go on defying the law and expect to remain at liberty. And should he ever come to trial what was there for him but a plea of guilty? Scotland Yard had not furnished anything like this!

CHAPTER XI

A POLITICAL SLANDER

Margaret Holt has just arrived to take Enid and me in her car for a wild run among these miniature Parnassi—the Blue Ridges—only we three. How delightful! I shall now learn from Margaret herself something about the sentimental side of Page Bannister. Won't it be fine! And what a piece of good fortune, thought I, to occupy a seat between these radiant queens of many hearts. Oh, pshaw! Here comes Enid's father, for whom I immediately recalled Margaret's fondness. But, of course, he will sit beside the driver, and, being so fleshy, will soon tire of turning to engage in the conversation. Strange that we—I mean middle-aged gentlemen like Grey—seldom realize how much they are sometimes in the way!

As we are about to start, Enid's attention is attracted to an auto which has just turned in from the common highway on the mountain side and is now coming down the narrow private road toward the house. The tonneau is empty, but in the seat forward there is a man, linen clad and wearing a modish Panama hat. It is John Koppinger. He was not expected, but being, as we have already seen, a close friend of the Greys, I thought nothing of his suddenly appearing on the scene. It would have been different with my friend the Englishman, had he been present!

"Don't miss your ride on my account," said Koppinger. "I

will wait on that cool and inviting porch over there until your return."

"Come with us, senator," said Enid and her father in the same breath.

So it came about, on Enid's insistence, that Margaret sat between the senator and me, while she took one of the little swinging seats on the side directly in front of the newcomer.

After a run of some fifty or more miles through the great natural parks of chestnut, beechwood and soft-maple, along wide winding roads leading around and over thickly wooded promontories; swinging now and again from the huge mouth of some forest gap on to fertile, highly-cultivated plateaus which the owners have staked off and are selling at fabulous prices for residence sites, we came, on our return, to superb Holtleigh, where we took leave of the fair Margaret, who, after all my little selfishnesses, had devoted herself to me so assiduously that, besides being much flattered by her attentions, I almost wished the foreign Captain could have seen us! And, as for Grey, he was so wedged in the front seat he found it quite impossible to turn and look back at all. At the end of the run he would have had much difficulty in getting out, but for the assistance of the chauffeur. How sad, thought I, that age was dealing so harshly with him! The elderly gentlemen who read this chronicle, if ever they have been similarly situated, a most beautiful girl in the tonneau or anywhere else near by and still out of sight, will know how to sympathize with my editor friend; but not I!

I felt intuitively that there must be some unusual reason for Koppinger's unexpected coming to Ashhurst, with the Senate hastening—a rare thing for that body to do—to close the long session so that its members, of both parties, might attend the big conventions soon to come together in Chicago, and the dire necessity of senators being constantly present to prevent sur-

prises in the consideration of the Purchase bill, for the second amendment was still in midair and the unrecorded vote on it had not yet been announced. But I was not sufficiently in his close confidence to learn the nature of his mission to Ashurst, and did not know about it until the editor called me into consultation the next morning, after Koppinger left for the Capital. Nor did I permit curiosity to lead me into inquiry.

"The cephalopodic Monger System," said Grey, "is planning to defeat Senator Twain for reëlection, assuming that he is alive. Not only that, but its miserable agents have concocted and are circulating a vile slander calculated to smirch his good name. Koppinger came up to tell me about it. The dastards would blacken his reputation even though he were dead."

"Such, my friend, is modern politics," I suggested.

"But a decent regard for him in his extraordinary misfortunes would seem to be his due. They are poisoning the public mind in his state with the story that by remaining away from the Senate he is serving the sordid interests."

"And once the story is believed," I added, "it will follow him to the eternal oblivion of his grave. Such is the receptivity of the masses."

"That is the detestable part of it," he replied. "Now, I want you to assist me in refuting it, by your wise advice, at least."

Just then Enid came upon the porch where we were sitting. She wore a look of sadness, and, as I thought, one of apprehension as well. I rose and offered my chair, but she thanked me, saying she came only to ask her father if Senator Koppinger brought any news from the city and why he had returned so hastily.

"It seems to me, my dear child, that no news would be far better."

"Please, dear father, I would be very much happier if you were not so despondent," said she, stroking his gray hair and kissing his forehead, as if he were the one most in need of being comforted. Such was her compassionate nature.

Then, in the gentlest tone and words at his command, he told his daughter of the situation in Senator Twain's state. Her face paled and her lips quivered, but in another instant the color returned and her eyes almost gleamed with a light that I am sure no one had ever seen there before. It was the fire of indignation now burning relentlessly at the very windows of her white soul.

"Father," said she, "I shall enter the campaign in person, and at once. Whatever the nature of the charge against him, I know it is a base falsehood that is being used to destroy him. It must be answered. I will hurl back the infamous accusation! You will approve, I am sure."

"I do approve, Enid, and I will go with you. You are a brave, honest girl," exclaimed her father, in a voice that trembled with suppressed emotion. In another moment he had folded his daughter in his arms.

Love, it is said, cannot see; it is blind. A love like Enid Grey's needs no eyes; its vision is through the heart. She did not wait to learn the details of the slander; it was enough that his character had been assailed. To defend him in any event and under all circumstances was the highest duty she could perform.

Vacancies occur in senatorial seats through various causes—by death, by defeat, seldom by resignation, but never until now by abduction. Yet Twain's seat was not vacant—unless he were dead. This dread possibility was as yet only a matter of harrowing surmise on the part of his friends, and of cold political speculation among those who would be glad to succeed him.

It was several days after Twain's disappearance before it dawned upon the public mind that his term of service would expire on the fourth of March following. There was so little thought of his not being returned as his own successor that the fact of the approaching close of his first term had seemingly escaped even the alert members of the Press Gallery. It was first suggested by a news item to the effect that Hiram Knotter (a suggestive name, indeed), whose talents as a promoter of industrial consolidations had earned for him a wide if not an emulative reputation at home and abroad, and who was now being spoken of in some of the public prints as a shining example of the self-made man—one who, finding nothing further to do in his peculiar line, had resolved to enter upon the philanthropic task of proving to the masses that monopoly was a good thing—that Hiram Knotter, as a preliminary step in this his fanciful beneficence, which, as his adulatory champions were saying, would ultimately entitle him to a place in the Hall of Fame—now the far away Mecca of repentant consolidators and vicarious reformers—had decided to permit his friends to choose him for a seat in the United States Senate, as the successor of Cornelius Twain. All this acquired additional color by reason of the activity of the corporations and other powerful interests in behalf of Mr. Knotter. Of course Twain's seat would remain vacant until the fourth of March, unless he should have the good fortune to return to it in the meantime, or unless he should die. In the latter case the governor would appoint a successor.

Two other aspirants had announced themselves—James Parsons, an Altrocrat, and a champion of the Purchase policy, and Samuel Sloane, who published a platform in which he declared that if elected he would examine the Purchase bill thoroughly and vote "as his conscience dictated;" also, that should Twain return, even after March fourth, he (Sloane) would resign from

the Senate so that Twain might be appointed by the governor. This was a strong and wily bid for the support of Twain's friends. It would be difficult to overcome it.

And, as an earnest of Sloane's promise, his friend, the Honorable Richard Sheridan, ycleped "the farmer-orator," announced himself for governor on the Sloane platform, pledged to appoint Twain. Under the state law the matter was to be submitted to a vote of the people, the primary to be held in September.

All of which was of deep interest to Hiram Knotter, who, meantime, was deluding himself with the belief that his philanthropic purposes, as outlined above, would win him the support of the people; he knew, of course, that he would be satisfactory to the gigantic concerns which were the fruit of his consolidating genius. But, as yet, Mr. Knotter was by no means a free agent, even in politics; being a large stockholder in the industrial combinations he had been so successful in putting together, he still owed something to their success, and would not do anything that might sacrifice his prospect of dividends. And there was the danger, too, that his aspirations would result in the success of Parsons, the thing above all else the consolidators didn't want.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Knotter, but from reports we get things don't look good for you. We mustn't lose this fight. The big fellow east who took the last issue of C. Q. D. bonds won't stand for political mistakes. In order to close the deal we had to give the Monger a majority of our common stock, mere water of course. He will try to put it to par. If there's no adverse legislation, he says, he'll do it. So you see how important it is that we don't lose the senator here."

Eph Fox always spoke by the card. As counsel for the C. Q. D. road he knew what was expected of him as the political

manager for the company. He was in his private car, "on a tour of inspection," the papers said.

Sam Ives was also on board. Sam was the political agent for Sloane, now dubbed "the resigner" by the Parsonites. Ives got on the Fox special at a little town way back along the line. Knotter had been picked up at a way station. These things always take place with exceeding care and caution, so as to keep the railroads out of politics!

"Are you quite sure of Sloane?" asked Knotter.

"What about it, Ives?" Fox was wary in regard to pledges. He liked to have other people make them, but didn't mind being a witness.

"I'll vouch for him; he will 'play the game,'" was Ives' reply.

"If you're satisfied, Mr. Fox, I am," said Knotter, after a painful pause. "But how about his resignation if Twain comes back?" It was not like Hiram to overlook details; and he was suffering dreadfully from senatoritis. It's a persistent disease!

"How about it, Ives?" Fox looked blankly out of the window. His mind was not on the possibility of Sloane's good intentions. There were dark visions before him, among them, doubtless, the faded face of the once beautiful Eva, with whom we are somewhat acquainted, and the hard visage of Lawyer Roberts, with whom we are to meet in subsequent chapters.

"If he don't come back there'll be no need of resigning," replied Ives, oracularly, and in measured phrase. Then Ives smiled knowingly upon both of his companions. Yet, at heart he, too, was sorely perplexed, for certain ugly rumors in regard to the state of mind of one Andy Akers had reached him only that morning.

"Is that answer satisfactory, Mr. Fox?"

"Entirely so, Mr. Knotter."

"Then I'll pull out of the race," said Knotter, resignedly.

In the game of poker that followed, they called each other Eph, Hy and Sam, all the way to B——, which was Bill Giddings' home. Here the special car was sidetracked until quite late that evening. Meantime Fox made a long visit at the Giddings residence, although he was aware that Giddings was away from the city, in Washington, as a matter of fact, keeping an eye on Mrs. Farnum's husband. Mrs. Giddings had died ten years ago, leaving to the lonely child the memory of a character fine and strong. Only Martha Giddings, the sole occupant of the Giddings residence that night, and by far the most beautiful girl in B——, can tell how heroically she struggled not to forget her mother's last admonitions, and to what end.

In his speeches Parsons was charging the misfortunes of Twain upon the Conservatives, the opponents of the Purchase bill. Sloane was advising the people not to be led away by the declamations of "a radical mountebank" who was too ready to pledge himself to support any measure, whether he had examined it or not, or whether he would know anything about it after he had examined it.

How could the people really know who was right and who was wrong? Each candidate had his partisans and his organization, his glee clubs, his newspapers and his brass band—a few of the luxuries of a senatorial campaign under the primary law. Both sides denounced the monopolies and lauded Cornelius Twain. In the whirlwind of excitement, the hurricane of human endeavor, there were few who gave pause to the ethical consequences of the contest. It was faction against faction, with the patronage that would be distributed among the faithful as the inviting prize of success.

Public sentiment was pretty equally divided between Parsons and Sloane. Orators came from all quarters to tell the

people what to do. The excitement throughout the state was intense. Merchants closed their stores, professional men left their offices, farmers flocked to the towns and working men asked for leave of absence—all to parade the streets with flying banners and shout themselves as hoarse as baseball “fans” in behalf of their favorites.

The comments indulged in by the tired, husky-throated partisans furnished some evidence of the popular confusion and displayed a variety of singular and amusing views on the pending issues. Men sat about the hotel lobbies far into the night indulging their opinions concerning public questions.

“That man Smith that talked tonight is a nabob. He don’t know a toothpick from a harrow tooth,” said one enthusiast.

“Well, he’s got the other fellow beat a mile, and can turn round and run home before Jones gets to the end of the string,” replied another. It was merely a question, it will be observed, of which was the most thrilling spellbinder, Smith or Jones.

“Ain’t either of you knows a cornsheller from a hayrack,” remarked a third. “Why don’t you get down to bed-rock principles? This ain’t a hoss race.”

“Gentlemen, a great public question is being discussed,” proclaimed a fourth. “It is the most important issue since one of the old parties tried to extend slavery to the territories. My father was a Freesoiler.”

“Speech! Speech!” Then the Freesoiler’s son would be boosted to a barrel head or a goods box; there would be more fireworks in the form of oratory, after which the enthusiastic partisans would adjourn to a convenient drug store, the state having gone “dry” at the last election. It will be observed that at least one of these partisans knew the true import of the momentous issue at hand.

Thus the contest waged. The mails were gorged with campaign literature. Local editors called one another bad names.

In several instances families became temporarily disrupted, ambitious sons taking issue with Conservative fathers who believed in "playing the game." History was repeating itself. Men's minds, coming into conflict in the clash over an epoch-making problem, were "striking fire"—kindling a light by which future generations might find their way.

In point of excitement and sensational incident the campaign had scarcely begun, for a new and unexpected feature was developing. The women of the state, until now in a quiescent mood, were about to lay aside their household duties and join the surging throngs of male workers. Female suffrage had not yet asserted itself as a moral force in that commonwealth. Until now the gentler sex had been content with those lighter affairs of life belonging to the domestic culinary and the nursery, supplemented by the recreative pastime of the strawberry festival, the sewing circle or "penny bridge." But the Twain affair—his mysterious disappearance and Enid Grey's love for him—gave the campaign a tinge of real romance, and romance, someone has said, is woman's controlling virtue.

The white-heat stage of politics was reached when a copy of an anonymous campaign circular was received through the postoffices by every voter in the state. This document came from an unknown quarter, but subsequent investigation showed that it had been carried into the state in great quantities ready for simultaneous distribution. It bore no imprint or other mark of identification.

It conveyed the startling information—whether true or untrue mattered little, so long as it was surcharged with serious accusation—that Cornelius Twain's attitude in regard to the Purchase bill was due to the fact that he was in the pay of monopoly; that he himself, with the sanction of his employers, had planned the scheme of "abduction" as a cover for his recreancy, and was now hiding in disguise. The story was

well written and in circumstantial detail had about it the air of plausibility. Here, then, was substantiation, by way of suggestion, of the Conservative insinuation when Baxter challenged Fordyce in the Senate to show that Twain would have voted with the Altrocrats had he been present.

Those who have had experience in politics know of the damaging effects of this kind of campaigning, and how difficult, even impossible, it is to overcome the wicked influence of a carefully concocted falsehood. It is this sort of thing that has brought politics into disrepute and blackened the character, for the time being at least, yet all sufficient for immediate purposes, of many a man who deserved better treatment from his rivals and others who were envious of his success.

The average professional politician is easily the most adroit fabricator in this regard. It must be that his estimate of the character of other men is founded upon his own shortcoming, which furnishes the criterion by which he puts his crooked practices into execution. To blast a reputation, though it have "the probity of the Apostles," is an accomplishment that belongs to those of his calling who have reached the last stage of desperation in the accomplishment of evil ends. It is a safe assumption, therefore, that the anonymous and scurrilous circular reflecting upon the integrity of Senator Twain had its inception in the resourceful mind of Sam Ives, and was approved by Eph Fox.

While it may be true that the prevarications of Ulysses were imposed upon the Phoenicians because they were a credulous people, we have the assurance of Milton that

No falsehood can endure
Touch of celestial temper, but returns
Of force to its own likeness.

The falsehood under consideration met this fate, but not until it had served to bring the sweet personality of Enid Grey,

a sorrow-stricken woman, into the limelight of factional politics. But for her heroic endeavor it is doubtful if the name and fame of the man to whom she was tenderly devoted would have escaped the blighting consequences of the calumny that was now being sedulously used to destroy him, socially and politically.

If Twain were dead, even his memory was not to survive untarnished; if he were alive, all the more reason why decent consideration should be denied him. To these appalling straits had modern politics come. To this end had the degenerated forces that too often dictate the fate of our nation at last arrived.

CHAPTER XII

A HEROIC WOMAN

But, not many pages since, I was telling you of the effect upon Enid Grey's resolute and heroic mind of the doleful report brought up from the Capital by John Koppinger, who, as we have seen, missed no opportunity to serve her. If she had guessed the reason for his attentions, it is quite likely Koppinger himself did not know it, and that he was trusting to fate in the hope that ultimately his purpose would be revealed to her and would be understood.

Here, then, was a strange field of endeavor for Enid Grey. Not until she met Senator Twain and their interest in each other became mutually important, had she known anything of dubious politics, nor of the insistence of certain lines of industry upon favoring legislation, nor of the necessities of ambitious reformers. Until now the circle of her friends and acquaintances had extended but little beyond those excellent persons whose minds, like her own, were absorbed in esthetical pursuits and pleasures. She knew the poets and philosophers from the books in her father's library, and the painters and sculptors by their works in the galleries of Europe, where she had traveled and studied with a keen appreciation of the beautiful. She spoke the modern languages with precision and ease—an exceptional equipment that well fitted her for the linguistic demands of a cosmopolitan life in Washington.

Their first meeting was at a dinner of state given at the White House, less than a year ago, and what took place on that occasion is worth the telling. There were gathered at this function a considerable number of the most influential and distinguished persons of official Washington — brilliant and beautiful women, learned judges, diplomats and legislators. The young senator was easily the center of attraction. Polished in manner, with a face that beamed intellectuality from its superfine lineaments, and a voice and vocabulary that commanded attention, serving to divert the flow of small talk that predominates at such gatherings, next to the President himself Twain was the most prominent personage in this assemblage of accomplished ladies and notable gentlemen.

He had observed her presence at the very moment that he came into the reception room. Surely, his eyes would have been in eclipse had he overlooked one of such surpassing qualities. When the guests were seated at the great oval table, being at the side of a cabinet member's wife, Twain asked her who the young lady was.

"All senators read "The Morning Record," and most of them know and admire its editor," said he, "but I must have been greatly preoccupied these five years not to have known before something of his charming daughter."

"Miss Grey has been abroad during most of that time, senator."

"Ah! That being the case I shall not accuse myself further. Had she been here I would deserve to be classed as a misanthrope."

"With her permission, senator—"

"I shall be greatly indebted to you, madam, for your kindness."

It may well be imagined that this opportunity to be presented

to her, after the guests had assembled in the blue room, was not overlooked.

Nor did the little group of dowagers, as they leveled their lorgnettes in the direction of the absorbed couple, fail to animadvert upon the more than passing interest that Senator Twain was taking in his new acquaintance.

"Isn't she beautiful?—and he *so* handsome and distinguished," exclaimed the first dowager.

"What a match it would be!" suggested the second.

"Oh, but haven't you heard?" asked a third.

"Indeed, no; do tell us, dear. Is she engaged? I'm almost sorry. To whom?" inquired the youngest, who was just out of her first habiliments of sorrow and was now beginning to indulge in searching scrutiny of eligible men.

"They say that Captain Mikleskoff—"

"Impossible! Why, he's quite in the throes of bankruptcy," exclaimed the first dowager, whose burial of two wealthy husbands gave her views great weight.

"Senator Twain has no money, you know," said the second.

"But his position, my dear."

"And Miss Grey is said to be wealthy," remarked the third exhibit.

"Oh, the young Russian was the first to discover that fact! This should entitle him to special consideration, of course, dear."

And many similar speculations and exclamations from the delightful collection of monitors that shape the destinies of Capital society.

It was in the midst of this brilliant and inspiring scene that the son of Venus first whispered his paramount message into the willing ears of Enid Grey and Cornelius Twain. Henceforth, for a time at least, Cupid would lead them through blossoming fields into realms of hope and happiness.

Then, alas! by some mysterious power of demoniacal intent, the god of love would be superseded in his tender offices and they engulfed in an abyss of woe and pain. Yet, while the spark of life continued to glow, their hearts would not cease to yearn, nor Cupid to fan the flame of their undying affection.

Now, if this narrative were dependent upon the musty files of the local newspapers for the least bit of the material out of which it is being constructed, it would suffice to say that a great crowd of enthusiastic citizens gathered at the auditorium on a memorable evening not long after Miss Grey and her father arrived at M——; that Mayor Alton presided at the meeting, and that the speeches that were made served to tinge the political horizon with some strange hues. But a statement of these facts alone would fall far short of accounting for all that really happened; for, even while the distinguished editor and his heroic daughter were speeding toward the west, preparations of an unusual nature were in progress for their reception.

In the first place, it must not be forgotten that Grey had long been familiar with the game of politics; had studied it from close range for more than a score of years. Many a man, aspiring to be a statesman, had shown the editor his "hand" and asked him confidentially what he thought it was worth; and rarely had the great editor made a mistake in his estimate of its real value. He knew intuitively, therefore, that when they arrived at M—— it would be unwise to "put the pipes agoing," as is said in the figurative speech of the Scotch; that is, it were best not to rush immediately into print with a defense of the absent senator's character; for that would only arouse resentment and precipitate an editorial dispute in rival local newspapers. He knew also that public opinion is seldom if ever the original product of the masses; that, no matter what the "common people" may think on their own account in re-

gard to any important question, there are many ways by which the trend of their thoughts may be diverted, too often, unfortunately, in wrong directions. Himself a moulder of public opinion, Grey knew, also, the secret of preparing the minds of the people to accept the truth. He was aware of the danger, should the public "get off on the wrong foot," and of the difficulty of getting it back in step again.

And so, if factional division and discord were to be avoided, it would be well to first enlist the sympathies of the real moulders of local sentiment:—that is, the mothers, wives and sisters, who, in the aggregate, and in their own way, generally exert the greatest influence in any community.

Having thought out all these details on the way to M—, he had sent Mayor Alton a telegram suggesting a plan of procedure. But to put Grey's suggestions into successful operation without engendering local friction would require most uncommon tact on the part of the mayor; for already one of the editors at M—, who was afflicted with a jaundiced temperament, and who had opposed Alton's election a few months ago, was now advancing reasons in his paper why a city official should "hold himself aloof from state politics;" why "the people," whose true interests, of course, the bilious local editor was deeply concerned about, except in the matter of monopolistic printing, were "opposed to bosses," and so forth and so on. Yet, Alton, being a man of peace as well as sagacity, would doubtless effect desired results without transgressing the code of morals set up by the editor for the rest of the community to follow. And he did, with the assistance of his saintly mother and his loving wife.

The Altons were at the station with a carriage to meet the visitors when they arrived. Although they were strangers, in some seemingly inexplicable way that only psychologists can fathom the editor and the mayor recognized each other quite

readily, and shook hands as if they had been chums from boyhood. And Mrs. Alton, some veracious persons have since averred, would have kissed Enid Grey then and there but for the fact that the good lady was quite short of stature and Miss Grey quite tall.

When they reached the Alton home—a large frame structure in the center of a spacious square of ground studded with stately elms and emulous box elders—a group of bright-eyed children, very curious about “the strangers from Washington where the President lives,” anxiously awaited them. Midmost amongst them—indeed, they were clinging lovingly to her skirts and apron strings—was a beautiful woman with wavy snow-white hair. A woman? Angel would be more appropriate. She was fair of skin, and her face beamed with seraphic sweetness. It was her face, indeed, among many other graces, that made Grandmother Alton famous for miles and miles around. Everyone loved her, and her presence was like a benediction.

Soon Grey was vainly trying to accommodate all the children at once on his short lap, and they were asking him many questions about “the great Capital.”

“Zat’s where Uncle Sam lives?” inquired Paul, the five-year-old, who was already noted for his proficiency in imitating the local caricaturist.

“Your Uncle Sam in symbol, my boy,” the editor answered.

Paul did not comprehend his meaning, but Thomas Alton, junior, several years Paul’s senior, and an unconscionable iconoclast, made it quite plain with this unsentimental remark:

“Oh, I guess there ain’t any Uncle Sam; he’s like Santa Claus, maybe!” Whereat Grey was moved to exclaim:

“How these western boys do progress!”

“The west is the seat of Progressivism, Mr. Grey,” replied Alton with a laugh.

During the past two days Grandmother Alton, who was not a minute older than she felt, being the director of social amenities at the Alton household, had called at the homes of numerous leading citizens; which accounts for the reception room being none too large to accommodate the many good citizens who came to pay their respects that evening. It was here that Enid Grey was taken to the very bosom of substantial society at M——, and that she and her father won the admiration and sympathy of a wide circle of intelligent citizens, against whose opinions, now firmly fixed, the "reform" editor of printing contract fame would hesitate to take issue.

"We thought you would be glad to meet our neighbors," remarked Mrs. Alton to Miss Grey, as she busied herself making the ladies comfortable.

There could be no doubt about the absolute sincerity of these excellent men and women. There is a marked absence of reserve among western folk that is in distinct contrast with the air of exclusiveness that seems to have settled about the daily life of the older and more wealthy communities of the east. It was in this sympathetic atmosphere that Enid Grey opened her heart to Mrs. Alton's neighbors. She told them frankly of her love for Senator Twain, and of the terrible consequences to her of his misfortunes. Most of them had been moved to tears before she was half through with the sorrowful story.

Then Grandmother Alton spoke, in gentle and encouraging tones, her benignant countenance all aglow with hopefulness:

"It is God's way, my child. Be not cast down. His wisdom and love are far more powerful and mysterious than the combined wickedness of all mankind."

By this time the gentlemen, having considered the practical phases of the situation, came from the smoking room to join the ladies in the parlor. They had decided upon a plan of

action, Mayor Alton having been chosen to explain the course it was thought best to pursue.

"Your father has told us, Miss Grey, that you have positive knowledge of Senator Twain's attitude in regard to the Purchase bill. This knowledge, of course, is very precious to you. We appreciate its sacred character."

"But his reputation, Mr. Alton, is even more sacred," she replied.

"There is nothing in this world more precious to all his friends, my dear girl. His good name must be protected, his integrity vindicated against slanderous assault. It is our purpose to do it, if you will assist us, or if you will indicate how we may assist you."

"The proof is here," she exclaimed in tremulous accents, as she drew from the mysterious folds of her raiment a tear-stained envelope. "You may read it to our friends, for it is no longer mine alone; it belongs now to a misguided public."

Her smothered sobs and streaming tears but added to the dramatic climax. By this time Grandmother Alton came to console her, leading her tenderly to a secluded corner in an adjacent room.

"An anxious note in your dear letter which came this morning prompts me to reply before I sleep," wrote Twain from the Charles street house in Boston only a few days before his disappearance. "Be not alarmed, beloved one, about the fate of the Purchase bill. On my arrival here last night I found my good aunt greatly improved. She declares that she will soon be well again if she can have me near her for a few days more. So, when I have been permitted to be away from her bedside, I have devoted the time in drafting a substitute for the pending measure and thinking out a speech I expect to make in favor of it—here, in the quiet of Boston Common, away from the Senate's turmoil. I have every confidence that

it will meet with the approval of my colleagues, as the bill now under consideration has many objectionable features. Still, it is based upon sound principles, and these principles must ultimately prevail, for they are just and proper.

"This is more than I have said to anyone else, for reasons that not even the most precious woman I know would be able to fully comprehend; yet I withhold no secrets from her.

"But for your apprehensions I would not trouble you with sordid politics, while there is so much in my heart I would have you feel as I feel it. Nor would I care ever to return to my public duties but for your sweet assurances of requital in that which thrills my mortal part with happiness and exalts my soul with a hope it never knew before.

"To be near you soon again, to read the meaning in the depths of your eyes, to breathe the sanctified atmosphere of your presence and hear your pleasing voice—ah! to me, one moment of such a privilege were worth all else on earth."

Long before the doors of the great auditorium had been opened to admit the surging crowd that gathered to greet the visitors, the contents of the precious missive had become known to most of the inhabitants of M——; for it is doubtful if anyone who had the good fortune to be in the parlor of the Alton home when the mayor read the Twain love letter went away unimpressed; nor did they ever forget the burning words it contained, nor neglect to give them wide-spread circulation the following day, expressing their entire approval of Miss Grey and enlarging upon her wonderful beauty and her sublime devotion.

It seemed as if all the notable people in the state had come to M—— to attend this remarkable meeting, and that most of them tried to find seats on the auditorium stage. Grandmother Alton was there, well to the front, and a great bunch of Ameri-

can beauty roses adorned the little table near the footlights, furnishing a rare picture, indeed.

The mayor presided, and when he rapped for order someone in the great audience rose and said, sarcastically, that if such a thing were not out of place at a politcal gathering, "it might be well to open the proceedings with prayer!" This touch of seriousness put the audience in a sober frame of mind, and the prayer that followed must have entered their souls, for it was an invocation such as had seldom been heard since those early days of the Republic when the hand of Providence, instead of the power of money, was recognized as the great contributing factor in all undertakings.

And the speeches, also. All the local orators and not a few of the visiting statesmen were called upon for remarks. It was a nonpartisan gathering, too. And what could the speakers say?—with the perfume of the roses in their nostrils, and Grandmother Alton, she of the billowy snow-white hair and seraphic visage, on the platform—what, indeed, could they say that was not eulogistic of the absent senator and complimentary to the woman who had lost her heart to him?

It was a rare experience for the people of M——.

The climax of human emotion and sensation was reached when the mayor, with deep feeling and in a choice selection of words—for he possessed the dramaturgic faculty, and his heart was enlisted in the effort—when he told of the love letter which he had been privileged to see, and of the purport of its convincing contents. But this did not suffice to quell the commotion nor stay the enthusiasm.

"The girl! the girl!"

"Fetch her out!"

"We must see her!"

These and like exclamations came from every part of the hall. Nothing less would appease the excited assemblage.

Grandmother Alton herself brought Miss Grey from her seclusion in the dressing room and stood beside her on the platform. It was enough.

The great throng rose with a mighty shout, and went into a fury of excitement. It was then, indeed, that every one in the big hall felt and knew that the good name of Cornelius Twain had been rescued from calumny.

Men—there were few exceptions—climbed upon the seats, and the very walls of the building seemed to bend and crack with their thunderous applause. Women waved their handkerchiefs; some of them tore the white scarfs from about their fair necks and shoulders to waft them aloft again and again. The disturbing factional storm had passed; so also the ominous calm that follows. The sweeping tornado of emotion that sometimes moves a people in a great and just cause was now arrived.

A change in sentiment was noticeable on every side the following morning. Where, only a few hours before, all had been bitterness and strife, and reputations, even of women, were being assailed, now a more generous feeling of respect and tolerance, not only for all womankind, but for men as well, was manifest among every class of society.

Was it the love letter which every one had heard about, or was it the very presence of the fair, graceful Enid Grey, that wrought the remarkable transformation? No doubt it was both. Either would have sufficed, for even to this day the expressions of admiration evoked by her beauty and character are treasured among the proud traditions of M——.

CHAPTER XIII

A RELATION OF TWAIN'S

This was a novel and yet a trying experience for Enid Grey. Still, before she arrived at Ashhurst again she was destined to meet, somewhat abruptly, too, with another one equally new to her. It came about in consequence of one of those harrowing occurrences we read about almost daily, whenever two railway trains attempt to pass each other on the same track—a head-on collision in which engineers and firemen are suddenly ground to quivering pulp, or slowly burned to death in the wreck of two monster locomotives, and others of the train crews are either killed outright or maimed for the rest of their lifetime. Fortunate, indeed, are the numerous passengers, particularly those of the underworld who are obliged to travel in the forward coaches, if they escape mutilation, being spared to shudder always when they recall the shocking catastrophe and think of the barbarous methods of management that brought it about; the heedless and heartless race for dividends at the inevitable expense of innocent human beings.

So that Enid and her father, when they had crawled uninjured through the window of their apartment in the overturned sleeper and heard the agonized cries for help, hastened along the track of twisted rails to the seething mass of iron and steel and the burning coaches ahead, intent upon aiding their less fortunate fellow creatures. To their great surprise they

met Chief Bostwick, who was coming from the opposite direction. Several others were also hastening to the rescue. Soon there were gathered about the scene all the passengers of the two dismantled trains who had escaped injury, and they were working, vainly enough, to relieve the sufferers.

After hours of effort, the fire having burned the wreck to cinders, cremating a score or more of victims, the tired, begrimed and half-clad workers withdrew to save their own belongings in the stranded coaches that had escaped the devouring flames. Afterward they assembled in the shade of the trees on the hillside, there to await the coming of a special which would give them a fresh start toward their respective destinations, where, on the morrow, they would read of "a railroad accident in which several lives are supposed to have been lost, but owing to the destruction of the wreck by fire the casualties could not be ascertained. The railway company soon cleared the debris from the track," the news report will go on to say so as to assure the public that it wasn't much of an accident anyway, "and traffic was resumed without serious interruption. The cause of the accident is unknown." So there would be no suspension of dividends!

At a station twenty miles away the passengers on the special were set down until the regular trains came along. Meanwhile Enid, her father and Chief Bostwick repaired with others to a small eating house for refreshments. Here, remarkable though it may appear to be, they were seated at the same table with Andy Akers and Eva Farnum. Bostwick knew them of course. He also knew that they were on the west-bound St. Louis express before the collision, and his feelings concerning them had now undergone a decided change on account of the humane exertions they made at the burning wreck. He hesitated about presenting them, although he was aware that accidents sometimes make strange acquaintances. Still, fearing that Andy

and Eva might suspect his motive if he did not do so, he introduced them in a most informal manner.

"Mr. Grey, this is Mr. Akers," said he.

"My daughter, Mr Akers," added Grey.

"My wife," responded Akers.

Then they fell to discussing the horrors of the accident, and after the meal Enid and Mrs. Farnum went to the ladies' waiting room, a rather uninviting place, it is true, but there was a vacant seat near the open window through which a cool breeze was blowing, and they sat down. Andy, who always avoided company, if possible, strolled away alone, whereat the Chief felt relieved.

Mrs. Farnum lost no time in telling Enid that she knew her quite well by sight, and that she had been much attracted by her musical voice as she had heard it in the Washington shops. The conversation was running on quite pleasantly when Eva, moved by some sudden impulse that she herself might not have been able to fathom had she been put to it, remarked casually:

"I also know Senator Twain."

Before Enid had recovered from her surprise at the announcement, Mrs. Farnum added:

"We are related—half first cousins."

But there was something in the woman's manner, a hesitancy in her speech, a downcasting of the eyes, perhaps, that seemed to put Enid on her guard. Still, having heard this much, and, surmising that Mrs. Akers would not have mentioned the matter at all had not she known in some way of the tender relations existing between the absent senator and herself, Enid realized the necessity of a reply. Besides, being constantly alert in the hope of learning something which might lead to a solution of the depressing mystery, she was impelled to question her new acquaintance.

"How strange that we should have met under such circumstances."

"Quite so," replied Mrs. Akers. "I sympathize with you deeply. There is not an hour that I do not think of your situation and pity you, and I have been greatly tempted to make myself known so that I might tell you—a very great secret. You will not betray me, I am sure, for it concerns my husband."

"Do not give me your confidence, Mrs. Akers, I beg of you, if—"

"My woman's heart prompts me that it is my duty. Besides, I feel the facts must come out, and that you should know beforehand."

Then Eva Farnum told Enid Grey all she knew about it, adding that she did not believe her husband was guilty of the crime that must sooner or later be charged against him.

"He has some hidden motive in permitting me to feel that he had a hand in it, but I do not believe him. If I did I should leave him and then expose him to the world, for Cousin Cornelius has been kind to me—and to my mother. Yet, I will not burden you with the details. All that I will say further is that, should anything occur which might make me serviceable to you and to Senator Twain, you may rely upon me—"

At this point Grey came into the waiting room to say the east-bound express was pulling into the station.

"Not a word to anyone; I am your friend," whispered Eva as she and Enid walked out upon the platform.

When the west-bound limited came along an hour later Andy and Eva, accompanied by Dick Bostwick, renewed their journey to St. Louis.

Whoever had been watching closely would have discovered that the wingéd goddess of allotment, the daughter of Erebus and his erring sister Nox, had been hovering near Mr. Fox's offices for several days back; yet the railroad lawyer was not

aware that Nemesis was present. Nor was he expecting Eva Farnum, a wingless daughter of pleasure and vanity, comely of feature and form, who had just arrived from the Capital. Mrs. Farnum suspected that Mr. Fox would be surprised to see her; but of one thing she was quite certain: he would not refuse to admit her to his sumptuous apartments, even during business hours, and she was quite as certain he would have her remain for a time afterward.

"Delighted!" he exclaimed, when she had succeeded in getting her card through the hands of the retinue of doorkeepers and messengers, and was arrived at his desk. "Be seated. How beautiful you are, Eva! Allow me to assist you."

The room was warm and she unbuttoned her jacket, asking if she might take it off. She knew now that she was welcome. Had it been otherwise, instead of saying he was delighted and remarking upon her beauty, he would have asked, "What can I do for you?" and looked coldly upon her. She knew Fox! His attitude toward her made a deal of difference in regard to the manner in which she would approach the subject in hand. He being so affable, she would not waste time on the niceties of language, nor dally with diplomatic terms, but would come to the point with such directness that even Fox must be pleased with her for her knowledge of the art of expedition.

"I have brought them with me," she said, after thanking him for assisting her.

"Them? Whom do you mean, Eva?"

"The ones that did the work—or overdid it, to be more exact."

"I do not catch your meaning," he replied scrutinizing her face closely.

"Giddings and Akers."

"Giddings and Akers? I've heard of Giddings. Oh, yes, I know a man of that name, but not the other one."

Neither did he know that Eva was again married, and she did not tell him.

"Then, ask them to come in; they're outside," said she.

"But first tell me what the business is."

"You are too utterly dense, Eph," she replied, impatiently.
"You've been drinking champagne again."

"I have not tasted a drop within a month, Eva."

"But you've had business with Giddings in that time?"

He looked at the ceiling; his brows contracted. Then he answered; "Not in a year—that is, not directly. Are you sure you've not been drinking, Eva? You don't look it."

"I would like a cold bottle this minute," she replied with a laugh.

Fox touched a button. Then they went into an adjoining room, a luxurious place, with rich oriental rugs on the floors and costly paintings and hangings on the walls.

"This is a recent importation, a special vintage, sent me by a friend who has a wonderful vineyard in Épernay. It is dry—too dry for you, I fear. See how it sparkles—like your wit, Eva. I drink to your lovely blue eyes; may they never fade."

"From your memory, Eph? That's what you used to say. I married poor Farnum because you asked me to do so, and you knew that I loved you."

"Ah, yes! That was years ago."

"When you were more gallant than now, Eph."

"Pardon me, Eva; you are not a day older."

"We are forgetting about Giddings," she suggested.

"Do you like the wine? Let me fill your glass. I have drunk two to your one, and am thirsting like a sultry glebe."

"How remarkable! I remember when it would have been four to my one."

"I will have them sent away—a message from you. Say you'll see them tomorrow. Then I will order dinner, just you

and me. We'll have a good old-time visit. But, Eva, you seem to be depressed. Drink your wine. I'll be back right away."

Acting upon the thought of disposing of Giddings and Akers, Fox excused himself, and going into his office he called his secretary.

"There are two men outside. Say to them, with Mrs. Farnum's compliments, that she will see them tomorrow morning at her hotel, 11 o'clock. And take this message: 'Come on first train without fail.' Put it in cipher; sign my cipher name, and send it to Sam Ives."

"They will think it strange that I did not see them in person," she said, when Fox returned to the room. But she had emptied her glass, and her depression was now at the vanishing point.

"Yet, they will not object," replied Fox, leaning over and kissing her, "because the message is from the sweetest woman in the world. They will be only too glad to serve you."

Fox was at his office at an unusually early hour the next morning. Indeed, he did not quit the C. Q. D. building after Eva arrived. He was anxious to see Sam Ives, and it may be that he remained up all night for that purpose. Ives, as I have said, was a sub-political manager. He took orders from Fox and lived in Senator Twain's state, where he contributed to the comfort of the statesmen that broke into the legislature now and again. How legislators do prize railroad passes! He also made life pleasant for other state officials, and the C. Q. D. Company paid the freight.

"Trouble is brewing," said Fox to Ives when the latter arrived and they were closeted in the adjoining room.

"Looks like it had happened right here," replied Ives, with a sweep of his hand so as to indicate the wreck of special vintage bottles.

"It did, or would have, but she liked the wine, and by the

time she was ready to go away she was in a condition to have forgotten all about your two friends."

"My two friends?—who?"

"I do not know. You will remember I was not to know. You had the thing in hand; yet I'm afraid you overdid it, Sam. That's what Eva says. Now, I sent for you so that you might put things in order and get them away from here—she and her companion, whoever he may be."

"One is Giddings," said Ives.

"So she said, but I do not want to know about the other one."

"And Martha came with her father."

"The —— you say!" exclaimed Fox. "If those two women meet there'll be more trouble. Take hold of it, Sam, in your best style. It won't do for me to leave the city while they are here, especially Eva; she'd say I was afraid and ran away. I'll keep quiet, and it won't be easy for anyone to get at me until the trouble's over. You understand, Sam?"

"I must see you from time to time, Eph, to report progress. And Martha?——"

"Bless her heart! Of course she can come here, if she wishes. Yet, that will never do. Eva will—my eyes, Sam! how she did put it out of sight last night. I doubt if she's able to be about much for the next two days. It's always so with her. And my own head isn't any too clear today. That's why I sent for you—to think for me."

"All right, Eph, I'll do the best I can. Why did she bring that bungling Akers? He's the one that overdid the business."

"I don't know a thing about it, Sam; please do not forget that fact."

"How about Martha? She may want to see you. Her father brought her along for that purpose, I imagine."

"Whether he did or not, I want to see her. If she's stopping

at the Southern have her change to the new hotel ; Eva's at the Southern. Then I can slip over—this evening, tell her."

During the next two days Sam Ives was a busy man. He had five very important persons to keep in touch with—two of them women. One of these was in love with Eph Fox, or had been not many years ago. The other one—well, Fox would have given his prospects in Heaven, if he had any, for the love of Martha Giddings. Yet, she had told him repeatedly that she did not love him, and had asked him to cease his attentions. She did love her father, however, and the fact that he was completely under the thumb of Fox, through Ives, accounted for Martha's presence at this time. Giddings had come on a telegram from Mrs. Farnum to meet Akers in St. Louis.

"I'm afraid your man bungled it," said Ives to Giddings, after leaving Fox.

"It looks like it," replied Giddings, humbly. "I told him not to make a serious mess of it—only to get him away from the Senate for a few hours until after the vote was taken."

"Don't give details," said Ives. "I don't want to know the particulars or anyone in the deal except you. Remember that. Whoever he is, get him away from here and make him quit talking. And look out for that Farnum woman. Don't make any more mistakes, Bill."

Then Giddings went to see Andy Akers. By this time the Farnum had come to herself, and was clinging to Andy more affectionately than ever, for even the dullest of persons must see that by this time Andy was become a valuable asset. After much effort on the part of Giddings, Mrs. Farnum was induced to go to Fox's office, although, as she declared, her head was "greatly tousled—inside." At Fox's office she was told the railroad lawyer was ill ; that he had to go to bed, and couldn't be seen. This she could easily believe.

"Champagne will be his ruin," she exclaimed. But before

she got back to the Southern Giddings had talked to Akers, and the latter had made a deep impression on Giddings' perceptions.

"You must go back and take her with you," said Giddings. "Too bad you gave her your confidence." Nor did Giddings seem to know of Andy's new relations to the Farnum.

"Too bad!" exclaimed Akers. "I was to do the best I could, but not to let him go to the Capitol till after the vote on the bill. I knew from the first it wouldn't be possible to get him away from that Grey girl without taking him away. Now, I also figured it out that no vote would be had on the Purchase bill for a month. So he went where he won't get back by that time, unless I'm greatly mistaken."

"Don't give me any particulars," replied Giddings. "I don't want to know the details."

"Of course not! We were not to know each other after we met that night when you got me to agree to do the job, and here we are—you trying to evade responsibility, and I suppose the fellows higher up are doing the same thing, while poor old Andy must carry the load." Then, after a long pause, Akers went on: "Say, Bill, suppose he comes back, won't he make things hum!"

"That's the devilish part of it," replied Giddings.

"Say, Bill," after another pause, "suppose he *don't* come back, eh?"

"Who will stop him?"

"That wasn't what I asked."

"What did you ask, Andy?"

"I said, Say, Bill——"

"That's what you said."

"That wasn't all."

"Not all?"

"No."

"It was enough."

"It won't be if he comes back."

"Well?"

Akers lit a cigar, after handing one to Giddings. Then he resumed:

"Say, Bill. People soon forget when people don't come back, and if they don't it's because they do."

"Andy, you are a trump, fit to be at the top in your profession," said Giddings, slapping Akers on the back. "But here comes the Farnum; I'll see you tonight."

Mrs. Farnum announced that she was going to bed; that Mr. Fox could not be seen until tomorrow. So Giddings sought Sam Ives, and that was precisely what Akers wanted him to do.

"You've got to let me give you some important particulars of recent events," he said to Ives. "If I'm a good guesser, it's a hold up, and a big one. The Farnum's in it. She's at the bottom of it. Akers is willing to be told what to do, but I think it will be costly."

"It has been costly already, Bill," replied Ives. "How much more will be required?"

"I have no idea. It's only a surmise as yet. Akers says it will be dangerous if he returns."

"Well, that's logical," Ives replied.

"And that if he doesn't return people will soon forget."

"More logic," added Ives. "They don't care much unless they're stirred up, the people don't. Feed 'em well, and they're happy."

"That's what he says."

"Well?"

"Well?"

They looked at each other intently; there must have been complete harmony in their thoughts. Then Ives broke the silence:

"Get his idea as to what should be done."

"I've got it," replied Giddings.

"What is it?"

"That he must not be allowed to come back!"

"Monstrous!" exclaimed Ives.

"That's what I think, too. But which would be the most convenient for us? I'm afraid he'll start something if he returns."

"I'll see you later. Don't let that bungler get away," Ives whispered.

If Akers had bungled the business in the first instance, he was now making amends by handling the case with skill. That was evident, even to Ives, who had no trouble now in reaching Fox. That gentleman's head had cleared up somewhat; it was perfectly clear when Ives put the question:

"Do you want Twain to come back?"

"Who wants to know?"

"I do."

"Who else?"

"You were not to know anybody else in this deal except me."

"True, my boy, true. Do I want him to——"

"That's it."

"After a long silence Fox asked:

"Where is Martha, Sam?"

"At the new hotel."

"God! But I wish everybody was as innocent as she."

"It's a little late," added Ives, impatient of Fox's evasiveness.

"What's late? Who's late?"

"Eva, Andy and Giddings seem to be on time, Eph," replied Ives. "But you haven't answered my question."

"Fire and brimstone, Sam! Can't you settle some things yourself?"

"Yes."

"Then settle them! Here's the key. It fits the upper right hand box. The vault's open. I am going to bed."

On his way home, when the noise of the streets had muffled the echo of Ives' question—although it continued to ring poignantly in Fox's ears—he thought of Martha, and, in the repentant mood of that moment, took oath he would never tempt her again. How well he kept his voluntary vow may be wholly dependent upon Martha.

That night the 11:40 train carried Eva and Andy back to the Capital. They were happy, for she had in her hand-bag that which duplicated many times the five large bills Andy gave her one night only recently; while Akers' joy and bliss could be measured by nothing more accurately than the present wretchedness of Sam Ives.

The next morning Martha and her father went west, and two days later Fox and Ives were in New York. They were there to consult the best lawyer in the land—not as defendants; at present they only wanted advice from Mr. Roberts, the advisor of troubled agents of consolidation.

CHAPTER XIV

THE NEW CAESARISM

Now, all these things, and there was much more I am sure he did not tell me, came from Chief Bostwick's private diary, which I was permitted to examine on his return from St. Louis. In another day he was off for New York; nothing could have turned him from his quest of Twain's assailants.

At once I was seized with the fear that the Chief's next move must certainly involve, even now, the very social center of the gigantic and merciless system of mongers in whose interest the stupendous outrage had seemed to be necessary; for it could be nothing short of fear that prompted my present emotions—a sickening apprehension that when the whole truth were known it was inevitable innocent hearts would be made to bleed out of very shame. Who could predict the far-reaching consequences of the impending revelations? How many stately dames, yea, how many lofty daughters and vainglorious callow sons, the offspring of our peculiar American "nobility," would be bowed in mortifying sorrow? Such, alas! is the wages of greed, which persists in overleaping itself.

But the period of hortation was passed; seemingly, that powerful force—human selfishness—had got beyond the pale of warning admonition. So, come what might, let guilt find its victims where it would, Bostwick must press forward in his campaign of investigation, for by this time, with many news-

papers and magazines still crying for avengement against a monumental wrong, the public mind had become intently fixed upon the theory that Twain had been abducted. Everyone believed it, of course; and what everyone believes must be true. Is not this the essence of pure democracy? So that, if the public can be persuaded only to believe, however little foundation there may be for the thing believed in, have not we established a superior brand of government?—no matter whether it be government by monopoly, government by a subservient press, or government by law—the latter, seemingly, being the least popular just now and the others more directly and immediately profitable for those engaged in it.

In the cavilling times of which I write public affairs had sunk to luckless straits. Healthful and honest competition had been superseded by a heartless scramble for wealth and power—not a struggle in which the fittest would survive, but one instead that invited soulless endeavor, devouring greed and a new kind of ambition for corporate sway over all the things of the earth. The inevitable result was that as the individual succeeded he was forced into combination with others of his kind. Thus the science of consolidation soon became sufficiently exact and durable to command considerable admiration and to excite no small amount of emulation, particularly amongst those who believed in “doing things” and accepted this rule of business as the acme of human aspiration.

And, notwithstanding the laws enacted with a view to restraining voracious combination, the work of consolidation went on unabated, until, finally, every line of industry came under control of a single management. Here, then, was a government of monopoly, by monopoly, for monopoly. Meantime, the noble profession of the law had been perverted from its original purpose of doing justice, though the heavens fall, to the baser end of circumvention; to the interpretation and con-

struction of solemn statutes so as to suit the convenience and ensure the further enrichment of predaceous wealth.

But our friend Grey has already given this subject no small attention, and few men understood it as well as he; none, perhaps, was quite as free to tell the truth about the tortuous thing as the editor of "The Morning Record," which, thus far, had preserved its independence, although the Englishman was in constant dread that Grey was in danger either of succumbing to the enticements of wealth or of going over to the ranks of radicalism, *in toto*.

In this situation, with Bostwick indefinitely away, and owing to my own recent absence from the country, being unfamiliar with the intricate workings of the modern political and business machine, I was left to meditate, to philosophise and to wait. What else was there for me to do? I had lost all interest in the Senate's proceedings, so tame and tedious had they become; and as for society and its empty, frivolous demands, I cared nothing. So that my thoughts were soon absorbed in an effort to justify the evil consequences in this strange affair, to adjust them to their basic causes, and to indulge in speculation as to whether I was living in an age of healthy progress or in an era that portended a new kind of paganism.

Two days later I had a visit from an old friend—a Philosopher whom I had not seen in a number of years, although we had kept in touch with each other by letter during most of that time. He came to my lodgings yesterday, and, I being out of my apartment, he left word that he would return at this very hour. Philosophers are always most punctual in keeping their appointments. And yet, had not I been aware that he was coming, I would know whose footstep it is on the uncarpeted stair; surely, whose methodical rap it is on the thin pine door that now opens to admit the sapient old sage to my humble quarters.

"Aut Caesar aut nullus," he cried, "for indeed, sir, as it was in the days of the ancient Romans, so it is now; it is Caesar or it is nothing."

Thus he greeted me, without even taking my proffered hand; yet, that was not an uncommon thing for my Philosopher friend to do. He was not an emotional man, and seldom went further in the matter of salutation than to make a stiff bow.

"Yes, sir," he continued, "again the world has its Caesars. But these modern tyrants are interested in erecting a new kind of dominion. Where the old ones disposed of their antagonists by breaking them on the rack, casting them into the Tiber, hurling them headlong on the rocks from towers and parapets, or put them to death by poison, by strangulation, by the sword, these new Caesars break the spirits and the hearts of the teeming millions by the slower and more unhuman process of sophistry and extortion; by picturing to them the beauties of independence, only to deprive them of its fruits through statutes that may be interpreted for the benefit of privilege."

Whereupon the Philosopher, ignoring my request that he take a seat, paced the floor solemnly, his hands clasped tightly at his back, his fine head poised loftily and his faultless features all animate with newly aroused indignation. I wondered but did not ask him what it was that had stirred him to such depths.

"Sir," he went on, after sitting down, "I am just from a meeting of the Yellow Dog Club, where we discussed the principles of Altocracy. We are all of one mind, for as there are no millionaires amongst us, only yellow dogs, remember, selfishness never enters into our proceedings. Not one of our members believes that Twain was abducted, but everyone does believe he would have been but for his mysterious disappearance at the very moment when he was to have been carried away. Still, we wasted little time on this comparatively trivial matter, over which the multitude is now in a state of delirium.

The Yellow Dog Club, sir, deals with the greater problems—the abstract question, the abridged inquiry, of whether this money-mad generation is merely setting the pace for its successors, and how long the Republic is to endure under modern Caesarism."

Then the Philosopher gave me an interesting review of the essential things that had happened during my sojourn in the Far East, referring with vivid causticity to the early achievements and later failures of one of our Presidents of whom, he said, much had been expected and nothing fulfilled.

"But, sir, it is the part of philosophy to be charitable. To err is human, and this makes the descent to hell an easy one for those who are willing to depart from truth in quest of power."

Here I may pause to remark that it was under these conditions that the Hon. Ephraim Fox, counsel for the Come Quick Danger Railroad, rose to a position of importance in the management of politics in those states which had been "shot with steel" by his railway company, and that Mr. Adelbert Roberts also acquired his great prominence as the special legal adviser of the Master Monger, and the adjuster of affairs at the nation's Capital.

As the Philosopher was about to proceed there came a rap at my door. It was Chief Bostwick, who, having had little difficulty in following the devious trails of Fox and Ives, had made some important discoveries in New York. Bostwick was unusually outspoken this morning. In fact, and to my surprise, he talked freely in presence of the Philosopher, and while running over his notes, having mentioned the name of Mr. Roberts, the Philosopher smiled.

"Ah!" he cried, "you made the acquaintance of a very great man, sir. It was he who spun the web in which the President I spoke to you about," addressing me, "was enmeshed. Roberts

is a great man, sir, and combines the highest wisdom in expedition and caution. He can weigh a problem with such nicety that his clients can violate the law with impunity ; it is all right if Roberts says so. Judges and lawmakers alike, not a few of them, in the leisure of their dignity, rarely question the opinion of this sapient man ; because, to the knowing ones, it is understood he guards the interests, on important occasions, of an aggregation of men whose combined capital reaches far beyond the ten-billion mark. Anyone in distress, if he belongs to the Mongers' Guild, need not bother himself about the cost of advice. It is all in the family."

Here the Philosopher indulged in a laugh, a rare thing for him to do. Then he apologized for his levity and arose as if he would take his leave, but the Chief and I persuaded him to remain.

"Your knowledge concerning Roberts," said Bostwick, "is too important to be dispensed with. Do sit down, Professor, while I go over my notes. You may find much in them that will be of interest to you."

"You are very kind, sir, to give me your confidence, which I believe you know will not be violated. And yet I am not sure that the detective's profession holds much interest for me. I've always avoided police courts, lest the revelations should shatter my ideals and disturb my reflections. I mean no disrespect, Mr. Bostwick, for either you or your calling."

The Chief bowed gravely, saying that detectives were not at all sensitive. Then he referred to Mr. Fox's part in this tragicomedy.

"You understand, of course, that he is a member of the Mongers' Guild to which you have referred, Professor, and that he had a very ugly experience in St. Louis in connection with a recent visit to that city of one Andy Akers and a woman by the name of Farnum."

But the Philosopher declared he was not concerned about the *hoi polloi* in this case. Still, he did feel an interest in Lawyer Roberts, whom he knew personally.

"Well," continued Bostwick, "Fox is just now greatly in need of Roberts' help. He never found any great difficulty in solving ordinary legal problems to the satisfaction of his company, but now he, too, is in want of expert opinion, about a matter the like of which never before fell within the pale of his legal investigations."

So, with due apology to my readers, and also to my Philosopher friend, for indulging the sordid recitals of the muse that presides over this part of my story, I will tell you of the experiences of Mr. Fox and Mr. Ives after they arrived in New York. Men of Lawyer Roberts' attainments, familiar as they must be with the motives and aspirations of their fellow-kind, waste little time in preliminaries.

"Good morning, Mr. Fox," said he as soon as the C. Q. D. counselor had entered the door.

"Howdy, Mr. Roberts."

Fox's familiar salutation indicated his good standing as a clansman. Ives had remained in the ante room. Bostwick says it is a rule of men of the like of these never to have a third party present during conferences of a delicate nature.

"Did you bring the girl?" asked Roberts, coming at once to the point.

"The girl? Which—"

"Miss Giddings."

"N-no." Fox was puzzled, and his face took on a glow of sudden color.

"Is she discreet?"

"Discretion personified," replied Fox in a confident tone.
"But why Miss Giddings?"

"Does she know when not to talk?" asked Roberts, ignoring Fox's question.

"She is a very sensible girl," was the answer.

Then Roberts looked through the open window, breathed in the invigorating salt breeze that came up from the bay, and played a tattoo on the edge of his big mahogany desk with his long fingers. Turning so as to look Fox straight in the eyes, he asked:

"Does she love you, Mr. Fox?"

"Damn it, Roberts, why indulge in ambiguities?"

"It is important, my friend; I must know."

"If she loves me?"

"To be sure."

"I am a married man, sir," replied Fox.

"That does not signify."

"Frankly, she does not; so she says."

"Unfortunate! You have questioned her?"

"Y-yes."

"That being true, I shall not ask if you are in love with her."

"If you should I would decline to answer," rejoined Fox, sharply.

"It would be unnecessary to call any other witness," said Roberts, with an effort at a smile. "But we are wasting valuable time," he continued.

"And making little progress," added Fox, sententiously. Roberts ignored the remark.

"As to her character, Mr. Fox—her good name. I must know without any quibbling."

"Of the highest order," replied Fox, positively.

"That is fortunate."

"But I did not come here to discuss Miss Gidding," exclaimed Fox, by this time very red in the face again.

"We will not discuss anyone else—not now; that is to say, she must play the leading part in this miserable tragedy."

"Tragedy!" exclaimed Fox. The redness had left his face, even suddenly. Instead, he was now quite pale.

"It may turn out to be a tragedy," replied Roberts.

"I hope not."

"So do I, sincerely. It was an awkward piece of business, Mr. Fox."

"I had no part in it, Mr. Roberts."

"That goes without saying. Confessions must be avoided."

"I have nothing to confess."

"One more question, Mr. Fox. Who does the girl love?"

"Her father, above all men, I believe."

"Ah! Fortunate again. Her father is connected with your company?"

"In a political way, yes."

"You can control him, of course?"

"I've always been able to do so, through others."

"How many others?"

"One—Sam Ives."

"And Ives? Is he straight?"

"Perfectly so."

"Won't sell you out, nor run away?"

"Nothing could shake my faith in him."

"Except the act itself, perhaps," added Roberts, parenthetically. "Now, you and Ives, being entirely innocent of any wrong doing, must stand together. You must know where he is and what he is doing every minute. Keep in close touch with him, Mr. Fox."

"He is here now—in the ante room."

"Ah, indeed! Step into the room over there for a few minutes and close the door, Mr. Fox. I want to talk with Ives, alone."

Touching the bell, Roberts gave directions that the gentleman in the ante room be admitted.

"I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Ives. How are the crops in your state this year?"

"Poor," answered Farmer Ives. "We had hot winds, considerable hail and then an early frost. There must have been a comet around; anyway our climate was all upset this year."

"Makes a difference in politics," suggested Roberts, with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Yes. When the people have plenty they're not hard to manage; when crops fail, politics is—like war."

"Full stomachs make easy consciences, Mr. Ives."

"Just so; and empty stomachs make mischief."

"It's a sin to be idle or to go hungry, Mr. Ives. Why, I've more work than I can do, and I met a hundred shiftless men in the streets this morning, some of them begging for food, but none of them asking for work."

Roberts' economic perspective was limited to his immediate surroundings. His philosophy was not permitted to stray into the field of economic morality. Having settled the great question of equal opportunity to his own satisfaction, he rose, extended his hand to Ives and said:

"I heard you were here, and wanted to get acquainted with you. Glad to have met you. I may see you again later."

"He seems a square kind of fellow," remarked Roberts, when Ives had retired and Fox came in again.

"I'm glad you like him, Mr. Roberts. He can be depended upon in any kind of an emergency."

"In your own way, Mr. Fox, keep Giddings sweet. Above all else his daughter must not talk with anyone, except her father, until she gets instructions. Then she must do precisely as directed. If she is the kind of girl you indicate, I can see a way out."

"May I know your plan, Mr. Roberts?"

"It is best that you know nothing about it; you are an innocent party, of course."

"Of course," replied Fox.

"One other inquiry, Mr. Fox. Miss Grey, I am told, is a most admirable woman, very much in love with Senator Twain. It is reported she was prostrated for many days after it happened; that she is of Quaker blood, tender, sympathetic, forgiving. What is your knowledge on these points?"

"I have no personal knowledge about it; yet my information is the same as yours. I am very sorry for her."

"Her deep sorrow may be valuable, Mr. Fox. I will send for you if you are needed. We must wait for further developments. So—good-day."

At this point in Bostwick's recital the Philosopher interrupted to remind us of his statement a while ago that Roberts was a genius of superior mould. Then Bostwick went on to unfold his discoveries.

"For the life of me, Sam, I cannot understand that man Roberts," said Fox, when he and Ives were behind closed doors at their hotel.

"He only asked me about the crops, and he put idleness and hunger in the list of sins," replied Ives.

"And his talk with me was quite as foreign to our subject as the crops. Most of it was about Martha. He wanted to know if she loved me, and insisted upon an answer. God! but I wish she did, Sam. I'd give up everything for her."

"Maybe she will love you, after we're all out of the woods," replied Ives. "What is our next move?"

"Roberts, after his enigmatical talk, said we must wait for further developments; that Giddings must keep still and Martha, too."

"That's reasonable," Ives replied.

"I fear it is too simple a remedy for a serious disease. He also spoke of Miss Grey's Quaker blood, her forgiving nature."

"Oh!" exclaimed Ives, "he would have Martha throw herself upon the mercy of the Grey girl, appeal to her for assistance in saving her father and herself from disgrace. Splendid! Splendid! Roberts wouldn't be where he is if he didn't have brains, plenty of them."

"He must be a wonder," added Fox.

"Why, they tell me," Ives went on, "that when he hasn't anything to do here he goes to Washington as a sort of recreation and adjusts the whole of the Government machinery the way he wants it, as a clockmaker adjusts a clock. He is the most expert conservationist I know of! He's got a wire running into every department over there and buttons at this end of them. He knows which one to touch and when to touch it. If an official gets gay with our crowd you'll hear a buzz in Roberts' office. The official will be transferred or removed, or maybe he'll be allowed to resign, if he's high up, and then a new man goes in who has to learn the ropes. This takes time, but time is money in our pockets. We can do a great many things while the Government is talking about them and getting ready. And you know that if a senator isn't good to us, he's defeated for reelection. Roberts superintends this department also."

"Oh, we've got a great system," exclaimed Fox, "from the top to the bottom."

"The top principally," was the laconic reply. "With the top all right, the bottom and all the way up will come right."

"Caesar! What a pull Roberts must have."

"It's tremendous!" exclaimed Ives. "Yet, the hardest job he ever tackled was holding that bucking President down. He had to have assistance. Even then he was almost a nervous wreck when he got through; but he succeeded in doing it."

"Superman against superman," replied Fox.

"Yes, and the other fellow had all the patronage and the veto power," added Ives. "But Roberts had the campaign fund in his vest pocket, and all our people were behind him. He also had helpers in the various departments, who assisted him obsequiously. He would have lost out in the days when the railroads were fighting one another, and the other corporations were competing for business. Consolidation is a great thing, Eph."

"No doubt about it, Sam; it's a great power. But how can one man cover so much ground? That's what puzzles me."

"Oh, it's easy for a man like Roberts, with the help he has. You could do it, Eph. Why it's understood beforehand, no matter what party is in power, who are to fill the high places in the Government. That's the machine that does the business. Have any of our people ever been hurt? There's been a lot of fourflushing by the Government, but we've got all the chips, haven't we?"

"It's a great game, Sam, but where do we come in, and how?"

"Oh, we'll come in all right. Roberts will take us through, but as to how he will do it I can't say. I'll bet the wheels are going around right now. We don't hear them; they're muffled and have ball bearings."

"We're under his orders, Sam. Now, you take the next train home. See your man Giddings at once, for that seems to be what Roberts wants done. Have him talk to Martha, bless her heart! She'll do anything for her father; anything to keep him out of trouble or to get him out. If he tells her he is suspected in this matter, and that she can save his reputation and her own as well, Martha will find a way to do it. She's mighty wise, Sam. Besides, she is proud and ambitious. And Giddings must stay close by that man Akers, and keep a watch-

on the Farnum woman. They've got enough to keep them going for a while, perhaps, but if, as you say, she can't play bridge a little bit, she will soon lose her part of it, even if Akers was square and divided with her."

Bostwick, having placed his memorandum book in his pocket, looked inquiringly at the Philosopher, and waited for him to give his opinion, which he did thus:

"Sir, I am not an expert in the casuistry of your profession; still, I would admonish you of one thing that occurs to me at this moment. In dealing with this problem you will doubtless discover that the average politician is not as bad as he is said to be, and the average reformer is not as good as he ought to be. There is not a vast difference in men. But, sir, you will find that Roberts is abler than all of them; I do not say he is more honest."

CHAPTER XV

THE NEW GOLDEN RULE

What a coarse, cruel, unfeeling world it is, to be sure, thought I, as I sat with a friend in the orchestra circle of a leading Chicago theatre, enjoying the sweet notes of a foot-light favorite who, to maintain her hold upon the pleasure-loving public, as my friend hinted, was obliged to do some rather stunning steps as a danseuse. Perhaps, to be entirely accurate, I should say it was not "steps" alone that drew the crowd, for she was riotously nimble of limb, and shapely withal. It was her dancing, for the most part, that evoked the greatest applause. Still, she was earning an honest living. And the throngs came nightly, even daily, during her engagement, to see the graceful creature, against whose rare charms, it was understood at all the clubs of swelldom, that a prominent member of the monger aristocracy had set a million in cash—take it or leave it, as she pleased. "A cool, round million, my honey," were the words that rumor insisted were whispered in her ear. But she spurned it indignantly, ordering him never to speak to her again. Still, one false report invariably begets a meaner one. So that, finally, the exchange was made. Thus the gossipers rolled the morsel under their mischievous tongues: wearying of the daily and nightly applause, her heart longing for something her head could not fully understand, the poor girl, moved by an undefinable rashness and the lure of gold,

threw herself at him, and was soon devoured. One had but to see her and listen to her sweet melody to know that the story was untrue, for she had retained her voice, her beauty, and her striking modesty, returning, after a month's rest, to the footlights. It could not be so with one who had the misfortune to fall under the destroying spell of a million cash.

But this lesser story, as the reader will see, has little connection with the one I set out to tell months ago. It comes to me as a reminder of some of the temptations in these money-mad times and as an incident of my observations long before impulse and duty moved me to make this chronicle; nor is it a figment of the imagination.

I became interested in this young lady's singing while waiting in the big convention city for the assembling of the leading politicians of the country, having arrived from the Capital for the latter purpose in company with my friends the Philosopher and Chief Bostwick. I was the guest that evening of an old acquaintance who, being a thorough cosmopolitan, was familiar with the gossip of the stage and the clubs of quite all the great cities.

Congress had adjourned a week ago, at the end of its long session, with the usual charge at its door that it had not fulfilled the essential promises in the platform of the party in power. But such accusations, like the one concerning the pretty singer's character, appear to be quite as common as they are sometimes unjust. The President's numerous messages to the body, wherein he made certain recommendations that met only with ephemeral approval, were now as "leather or pruella," for new issues were rising and new platform pledges were incubating, crowding old ones back into the dusty domain of forgotten political faiths.

So that public interest was rapidly shifting to the two great conventions soon to convene in the big city of the lakes, and

many senators would be present. One of these conventions was to be the first national gathering of the Stalwart hosts of the two old parties, now combined and consolidated, as I have said, under one banner, across which was emblazoned the word "Conservative"—a term which many deeply interested persons believed would have a sort of anesthetic effect on the public mind.

A humorous poet, with a vein of irony in his nature, had perpetrated a musical skit symbolizing the commercial spirit of the party and of the age as well. The prodigies who love wine and song and who infest such gatherings with their noise, turned the serious proceedings into ridiculous burlesque by singing the lines unctuously and uproariously. It deserves a place even in this historical work. It was called "The New Golden Rule."

Dimes and dollars, dollars and dimes;
To be without money is the worst of crimes.
Keep all you get, get all you can,
Is the first and the last and the whole duty of man.

"Delightful, delightful!" exclaimed Burrill to a little knot of Conservative senators who were there to see that the platform of the political amalgamation was written so that it could be "properly construed" at the next session of Congress. "You should put that in your platform," continued Burrill. "It typifies your principles; it voices your policy. It is blithe and expressive, and might well have been used as libretto to the vibrant strains of Nero's fiddle when he played in burning Rome."

Baxter smiled; he had been classed with Nero on several prior occasions. Then Paine, the pundit of the Senate, said:

"That was a flight of fancy of one Suetonius. More reliable commentators say that Nero was not on the tower, and moreover that he was not musical."

"Yet, after the Christians were crucified and burned in the gardens, Nero drove his chariot by the light of the flames, and

built his golden house at the cost of robbery and extortion," replied Burrill, who knew history, too. Elsewhere I have said the Senate was devoid of imagination, but there were some individual exceptions among its membership.

"It was a conspiracy that roused him," replied Paine, blankly.
"So, also, with Altocracy," answered Burrill, sharply.

The wise and learned Paine had lived to a very ripe old age—not in years, but in esthetical observation and study. Still, the range of his thoughts was somewhat contracted; he knew "the common people" and their aspirations principally by what other scholars had said about them in books.

"Come! come!" exclaimed Andrew Holt. "We're all good fellows, and must be generous with one another. You'll pass your Purchase bill. I'm going out of business. Already my monopoly, as you call it, has taken steps to dispose of its constituent plants. We intend to sell or to lease them to responsible employés. So, you see, you will not be able to confiscate our property when your new law becomes operative."

"Good for you, Holt!" shouted Brady, slapping the millionaire on the back." "If all monopolists would do that, a Purchase bill might be unnecessary."

"It would not be necessary until the purchasers or lessees combined," suggested Halsey, with a sarcastic laugh. "Human nature is stubborn; you can't legislate greed out of its system." Halsey's philosophy was almost brutal.

"True," replied Brady; "yet, when human nature becomes perverted, it should be effectually penalized. Without efficient laws against the common highwayman no one would be safe on the streets. We rarely fail to apprehend the transgressor in little things; but it is seldom those who commit a certain class of greater crimes are caught."

"My dear friend," replied Halsey, "I admit your assertion is true in part, and it is in close accord with predominant public

opinion, but public opinion is too often misdirected for political ends. It is an easy matter for them that are engaged in promoting new policies, based largely upon theory, to stir the people to a ferment of passion. The spectacular thing is always popular, but even the statesmanship that comes out of Dreamland may not be the wisest. From my old-fashioned way of thinking there is positive danger in political delirium. How many of the really great men of history, think you, were equal to putting handcuffs on an hippopotamus, or to roping a rhinoceros, or even to riding a broncho? How many, I ask, could lariat a jack-rabbit or drive the beasts of the jungle to cover in terror?"

"There has been but one," interposed Fordyce, solemnly and in a tone of regret.

"You answer well," responded Halsey, "and how many men have succeeded in monopolizing the precious article of civic virtue, putting the brand of crookedness on all the rest, either directly or by implication?"

"A rare art, I must confess," said Fordyce. This partial admission encouraged Halsey, who continued :

"There are two serious and forbidding elements in modern politics—Hysteria and Lethargy. Politicians are to blame for the one and the people for the other. What is most needed for the repose of our country is Equipoise, national and individual, supplemented by Renunciation and Tolerance. Unfortunately, human perfection is to be found only in novels. Again, the man that parades his own honesty by attacking the integrity of them that may disagree with him, or with whom he may choose to disagree, is not likely to be a safe leader. Some day the people, tiring of political vaudeville, will gladly come back to these trite maxims. Then we shall have a period of repose and genuine advancement."

But Halsey had many such odd notions as these ; in fact, he

had been accused of being "an old fogy." It was true, also, that he preferred, as he declared, "the sublime music of Beethoven to the frenzied, debilitating ragtime of that rhapsodical period."

"What disturbs me more than all else," remarked Fordyce, who was a just man, "is whether, under prevailing conditions, we are not to have a new 'Marseillais' to stir into deep hatred the smouldering sentiment against oppression and arouse the frivolous millions to bloody deeds. Our great Republic has ripened more quickly than even the most optimistic sociologist ever dreamed of, and the greatest concern of real patriots, it appears to me, is the nature of the inevitable harvest. Are we to find the answer in the results of these conventions? Will the new party and the new political leadership overcome the power for evil that is now being exercised in the interest of consolidation?—make the accumulation of the world's wealth by a few men impossible?—allay or even dissipate the universal dread of artificial financial panics, for these have been at the bottom of most of our public ills? If these desirable things are to be achieved, it would seem that no President should ever extend the hospitality of the White House to the malefactors who are responsible for certain disreputable business methods. Instead of calling them there to consult with him in regard to public policy, why not incarcerate them for their glaring misdeeds? Instead of listening to their threats to lock the doors of their banks if the consolidators are not to be allowed to go on violating the law, why not put the arrogant and impudent knaves in jail and prohibit the sending of flowers to their cells. A radical remedy, did you say? Truly, but no worse than the cancerous disease now eating at the vitals of the nation, nor as bad."

And Fordyce was not drinking, either; Baxter's smile had

ceased to haunt him to further ineptitude, and he had acquired a reputation for being quite sensible, when sober.

As usual, on such occasions, several prominent members of the Grasps' Guild were there to take observations. Notably amongst them were Andrew Holt and Ely North, whose combined wealth was sufficient almost to stagger the imagination. We have already had an intimation of the aspirations of Mr. Holt, who long since found it impossible to understand why his importance in the financial world did not entitle him to a seat in the Senate. As for Mr. North, who, no doubt, was laboring under a like delusive conviction, he was acquiring public distinction by the entirely unique method of lecturing the agriculturists, enlarging upon national extravagance and the profligacy of the people. A corpulent humor had he!

And yet, with all their millions, these men were not happy. Indeed, I have sometimes thought the veriest pauper was less miserable than they, or any of their kind. As an illustration of what I mean: It is something to have a comfortable share, if we do not make ourselves uncomfortable wanting it all; yet, it must be the sum of complete wretchedness to possess a great fortune and spend our days in a soulless struggle to strip our fellows of all their belongings. Still, there is a misery, I imagine, that is more intense even than this: Having succeeded in beggaring a small empire of men of their independence and manhood, by our avariciousness, and, through despotic measures, laid a vast community under perpetual tribute, we suddenly awake to a realization that our stupendous gains have become a burden to ourselves, and that we have gone too far to find a resting place even in restitution. It is then that we begin to look about us for an opportunity to justify our covetous course. By this time our neighbors have come to regard us for our grasping qualities alone; and no matter if we spend the remainder of our days expounding the code of morals, reciting

the evils of avarice and bewailing the hollowness of a life of greed, no one will believe what we say. However much we prate of patriotism or declaim about proper national ethics, those that know of our previous misdeeds and those who see and feel only the effects of them do not credit us with the smallest particle of sincerity, and the whole world laughs us to scorn. This, then, is but the period of dry rot in a career of cruel cupidity.

Such was the fate of Ely North, who was now eking out a sordid existence of isolation. With the hard judgment of his unsympathetic fellowmen already upon him, what would be his reward when, robed in his pocketless shroud, he should appear for final sentence? Surely, it would not be, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Still, by then, perhaps, the Northern Spike Company will have erected a needle with a great eye, through which even he, like Koppinger, may pass, unhampered by worldly sins.

And yet it may be that Mr. North was not bothering his mind about spiritual matters, else, perhaps, he would not concern himself anxiously with the details of Altrocratic intentions, or grow red in the face when Senator Brady, whom he had just berated for his radicalism, expressed this opinion about him:

"Oh, you're too busy cutting coupons to be patriotic."

"Quit dreaming, my boy; quit dreaming. Go home and be good," was North's soothing rejoinder.

"Go home and be good; quit dreaming. This is the advice invariably given to those who, if they wish to remain in politics, must 'play the game' with the pack of cards duly 'gummed' by the Guild." This was the parting shot that Brady gave the magnate.

Just before the Altrocratic convention adjourned, a resolution, condemning "the criminal degeneracy of a cause that finds

justification in abduction" and sympathizing with "those near and dear to Cornelius Twain," was adopted unanimously. Enid Grey was now a national figure, Cornelius Twain a martyr and the Altrocratic party a promising political force.

If Eph Fox had any purpose in lingering in the city of the lakes while the lithographs and general litter of the two great conventions were being swept up, it must have been on account of his extreme anxiety to see Sam Ives, who had gone to Washington to confer with Bill Giddings, and was expected to return as soon as possible. Giddings was at the Capital so as to be near Andy Akers.

Had Andy and Eva been sufficiently placated?

This question, sufficiently comprehensive to Fox's mind, was now infesting his mentality sorely and persistently. Nemesis was surely arrived again. Ah! if it were only Martha Giddings instead of Nemesis; for, although Fox had not been able to fathom Roberts' plan of action, neither could he resist the wicked emotions of his unhallowed heart when he thought of Martha and his unrequited protestations of love the night he sidetracked his private car at B—.

Ives returned promptly to say that Giddings was alert and active, that Andy and Eva were happy, for they were at the sea shore, jostling the Boardwalkers—"the lenders, the givers, the spenders, whose motto is Easy Goes." But Ives' breast was filled with dire apprehension. He had seen Ralph Bolston.

"Of course," said he, "the meddling Englishman don't know me. That being the case, I had an opportunity to look him over, to study him. He is a big fellow, with reddish hair and beard and a powerful underjaw. Looks like he'd shoot or do anything that he had to. I didn't admire his confident air; he seemed to be too well satisfied with himself."

And there were rumors, too, that Bostwick was on the trail of several suspects, whose apprehension could only be a ques-

tion of a few hours' time, but Ives did not learn who the suspects were.

Then Fox relapsed into a thoughtful mood, and drummed softly on the arm of his chair. Finally he said:

"We leave for New York at once, Sam. We must see Roberts."

Now, when Akers and the Farnum got back from the west, taking counsel with each other on the way, they were greatly encouraged over the possibilities of the future. They were in a frame of mind not unlike that of a prospector, who, after being grubstaked most of his life, suddenly comes upon a rich vein of shining ore that juts out in globules as if it were so plenty that the quartz rock couldn't retain it. The old miner's dream has been realized at last! He knows that the rhino is there, plenty of it, although the exposed shoot has not yet been developed. How beautiful the world now appears to him! How sweet the memory of his years of hardship! Already he is a millionaire; he'll buy Jem Smith's "joint," remove the slab counter and give the boys free access to the red liquor. After that he will go east and show the swells how to enjoy life. In fact, the prospector is happier than if he were a real millionaire.

So, Andy told Eva they would now proceed to follow their newly discovered lead to the bottom of the earth.

"Just leave it to me," he said. "I'll be square. You'll wear more diamonds than you ever saw before, and you can raise the bridge limit so high it will shut out the pikers."

"You know that I love only my dear old Andy, don't you, dear?" said she in mellow tones.

"I've sometimes thought so, and again I've had my doubts, Eva." So might Eph Fox have had his doubts not many days ago!

"How can you be so cruel as to misjudge me, Andy!" Eva was deeply hurt.

Then they retired to the dining car and cracked another cold bottle, for they were flush with spoil.

After Ives left Giddings in Washington, beseeching him to keep an eye on the Englishman, Giddings sent for Akers to come over from the shore. He told him of Ives' apprehensions and of his own investigations and surmises.

"And Sam Ives is getting nervous, is he?" said Andy, laughing in exultant fashion. "Maybe they will find him, Bill. Maybe they will."

"It looks like it," replied Giddings.

"Maybe they will," repeated Akers.

"And if they should?" inquired Giddings.

"Say, Bill, do you want him to come back?"

"Someone higher up does," replied Giddings.

"Then someone's a fool!" exclaimed Akers. "I don't; no more do you. We're partners, Bill, all of us. My liberty's sweet; so's yours; so's theirs. Already the people are forgetting about it. They will take notice again, if he comes back."

"What is your plan?" inquired Giddings, nervously stroking his chin.

"It's working now; it's been at work two weeks. *He won't come back, Bill!*"

This announcement by the man who had had the nerve to undertake Twain's abduction produced the desired effect upon Giddings. He didn't reply, except to say that Andy was a masterpiece of erudition. Again he told him that he had enough brains to be at the top of his profession. Giddings wanted time in which to think; yet he didn't tell Akers of his forebodings, nor chide him for the measures he had seemingly adopted on his own account to prevent the return of Twain.

And now, for a short time, we must take leave of Mr. Akers and his pals. Fox and Ives would not enjoy this distinction. If it could be managed otherwise, they nevermore would appear

in these pages. And, although they may not be brought to account for their transgressions, not in the usual way, by court processes, with bailiff and bondsmen to help them, it is well that there are other ways of apprehending abductors, with Nemesis never asleep and men of the like of Arthur Grey, Ralph Bolston and Dick Bostwick always awake.

CHAPTER XVI

RUNNING FOR THE SENATE

Forearmed denizens of Washington provide early against the coming of the "dog days." By the time this period of flaccidity arrives those who can afford to take themselves to the near-by mountains or the more northerly summertime resorts along the seacoast, or by the great lakes, have closed their houses or abandoned their apartments in the hotels, having first deposited milady's furs and fine rugs at some place of safety supposed to be proof against the cupidity of burglars and the voracity of moths.

I am speaking now of the unofficial set—of those that have no public duties—who are free to come and go, with no censorial eye to follow them, nor critical constituents to please. This set in Washington enjoys its exclusiveness. It is non-partisan and non-political because of its disfranchisement; the people of Washington do not vote; they are not troubled with elections. Therefore, they need take no personal interest in politics—a happy lot, indeed! In their estimation, one administration is as good as another. Nor does the coming of a new one—except as its foreshadowed policies may affect dividends on their bonds and stocks or the price of suburban acres in which they may have been induced by realty agents to put some ready money—concern them perceptibly.

I cannot say the female members of this aristocratic class—

the old families that pride themselves upon their freedom from snobbishness—do not partake of the common interest in the latest mistress of the White House, who has been heralded as the most beautiful and refined of ladies. (This is always true of the President's wife.) And so they will all be there when the winter receptions come round, provided they have succeeded in being remembered when the invitations are sent out, to see for themselves, reserving their opinions, to be sure, for their own exclusive circle, where the pomp of this administration will be compared with that of former ones as far back as the time when Dolly Madison's beauty and brilliancy enthralled the statesmen that hung admiringly about her throne.

And how generous these very excellent people! seldom condemning anyone, but rather commanding everyone for their fortitude, under trying circumstances; always sympathizing with “the first lady of the land” and the wives of the various secretaries who assist her in doing the honors at the great functions—an example of good breeding, indeed, in these cavilling democratic times, that deserves recognition.

Then, there is another set, the most considerable in number at the Capital—the government employés, some thirty thousand at least—that must have its summer holiday. These workers go no great distance away, for most of them have a hard time of it all the year saving enough from their not over large salaries for railroad fare and the upset rates at the resort boarding houses, where, to be sure, they must indulge seasonable finery, else they, particularly the women, will be overlooked in the passing throng.

If we have found something to admire in those having the means to be “nice,” alas! are we met with much to excite our pity. What an institution it is that invites you to a life of servitude as a government clerk! How poor the compensation, even though it does “keep the wolf away,” if men are to be

unmanned and women condemned to oldmaidhood; for that, after all, is the fearful price one is likely to pay in such service. The man, if he would keep his name on the payroll, must have no opinions about anything, not even his work, for this is done under rules that come out of a machine as does a bolt of calico.

Once a friend of mine was descanting to me upon the perfection of the linotype, the wonderful thing that sets the letters for these pages.

"Isn't it marvelous," said he. "It fairly thinks."

It is different, let me say, with that piece of mechanism that makes rules and prescribes the duties of government clerks, for this one does not think; it acts automatically, and, considering that its parts are all human, the action is most unintellectual. Hence the automatic nature of its product—the thirty thousand—who consider it a reflection upon the involuntary institution, the Civil Service Commission, I might as well say it, to which they owe their appointment, if they give overmuch attention to the display of acumen. So that they become mere machines. And who blames them? Not I. Their leave of absence, their period of recreation, partakes of the same character as their life-tenure servitude, which is a sort of civilized emasculation. If one of them marries another, the tenure of the one or the other is put in jeopardy, with two mouths to feed on a single salary, and the constant danger of family increase. What an inducement to race suicide, too!—more reprehensible even than animal slaughter in the jungle. Yes, these poor celibates have their holiday, too, and they are dreary enough.

But the most pathetic victims of Washington's heated term are the wives and daughters of the Congressional circle, which includes both houses; although some of my readers have fallen into the habit of speaking of members of the House as "Congressmen"—which, indeed, they are. But the House

is not the whole of Congress, dear reader, the Senate being one branch of it; and the heat affects both houses alike, as was demonstrated most painfully when the Senate awaited the return of Twain. As I have said, it falls largely to the women of the Congressional set to do the social honors. To most of them this is a very pleasant duty during the winter months; but, long before the sun has crossed the equatorial line, society's demands have come to be tremendously irksome to those who hail from the north. Washington summers, though, do not drive the fair southerners away. The ladies whose husbands or fathers, as the case may be, represent northeastern districts may return to their homes with but little inconvenience or waste of time; but those from the far west, being new to the business, as a rule, owing to the frequent changes under the primary election system, usually remain until the end of the long sessions of alternate years. Having now acquired a taste for the shallow thing, and being so far away from home, they stay on to the end. These, then, are the real heat sufferers.

Nor will sunstroke, even, discourage Mrs. Barleysheaf, of the House. How perfectly one's attire sometimes fits one's name! Finding small opportunity, as she thinks, to satisfy her social ambition as the wife of a mere member, long before the trees have leaved upon her first Washington season she has discovered that her distinguished husband really belongs in the Senate, and this discovery has been duly imparted to him. At first he does not take kindly to the suggestion, on account of the expense. But soon he, too, makes a discovery, which is—that the House can never be anything more than "a mere mob." Think of the numerous bills he has dropped into the big box at the Speaker's desk, and as yet not one of them has come out of committee! Surely, this is no place for such genius as his.

Nor have the names of Representative and Mrs. Benjamin Barleysheaf appeared as yet in the newspapers as the dinner

guests of the President, nor of any member of the Cabinet. They have dined out but once since their arrival six months ago. That was on the occasion of Millionaire Senator Koppinger's elaborate spread at the largest hotel, when all of Congress were present and many others of less consequence. It was very kind of Koppinger to invite them, to be sure, but how else could it have happened when the senator's secretary wrote the invitations so as to include the names of all senators and members and their wives or daughters as he found them printed out in the Congressional Directory?

And the Honorable Ben Barleysheaf takes early counsel with "Mrs. B." (his way of introducing her). We have known all along that he would come to it!

"It will cost us like blazes, my dear," he protests.

"Suppose it does; it's worth it. Besides, we may never have another chance, and what is money for, anyway?"

So the Honorable Ben is persuaded. He bustles about, reads the census statistics and the agricultural reports, getting ready to make a great speech "to the mob on the hill." What boots it if his colleagues retire to the cloakrooms while he reads it nervously from his place on the floor? He will not send out in franked envelopes to his constituents any less number of the great effort on that account, you may be sure. The heat has no terrors for either of them now. They are running for the Senate, which body, of course, awaits their coming in deepest anxiety. So also do the politicians and the country editors in the Honorable Barleysheaf's state. And Mrs. B. plumes herself accordingly. She will show "those stuckups" at the White House who haven't bidden the Barleysheafs to dinner, so she will, and that Mrs. Ole O'Margarine from the middle west, too, who gave a great reception recently that Mrs. B. knew about only at second hand.

Well, the Barleysheafs were now come to the Senate. It has

cost them nearly all of their life's savings, and still some of the local editors at home persist in referring to the now distinguished statesman as "a mighty tight wad." Yes, they were now in the Senate, and the Honorable Ben selected his committee-room far down in the Crypt, where Bill Giddings went on a certain occasion to make sure, by the oracular word of an ancient employé, that the body would take a vote on the Purchase bill on a day certain.

And Mrs. B. lost no time, you may depend upon it, in making her first official calls at senator's houses, and on the wives of Cabinet ministers, and at the foreign legations, even at the White House. She looks askance on her old acquaintances of the House, and cuts Mrs. Ole O'Margarine dead the very first opportunity. She is a senator's wife, and has begun to climb the social ladder. When the heat comes again she will not linger at the Capital, but will go to Atlantic City. Another two years she will have learned that this is not considered to be "*en règle*," or, perhaps, "*au fait*," and this time she will hie herself to Bar Harbor, or, if the crops have been good at home and the farmers have paid their interest at Barleysheaf's bank, in such case she will go to Narragansett Pier, where she can take a practical look at the Newporters. *Sic iter ad astra*, which, for the convenience of Mrs. Barleysheaf, may be translated, "Such is the way to the stars."

So, also, did John Koppinger and Ralph Bolston make some hasty plans against the coming of the dog days. They took themselves to the Blue Ridge Hotel, near Ashhurst, but not on the same train, as happened when they went to Boston; yet, neither knew that the other intended to make this place his home for the summer. Bolston, however, was not surprised to meet Koppinger there, for he knew now of the senator's hurried visit to the Greys to tell them of the slander that was being circulated against Twain, and no longer had he any

doubt about the tender aspirations of the distinguished bachelor senator, deplore it as much as he would. What nettled him almost to the point of breaking with Koppinger entirely, and frankly telling him so, was that the senator should not at least make an effort to hide his infatuation, out of a decent regard for Twain. After all, what business was it of Bolston's, he asked himself? But was there any reason why he should lose faith in Enid Grey? None whatsoever. Had she not rescued Twain's name from calumny? Was there any act or word of hers that suggested disloyalty? Not a move nor a sign upon which John Koppinger could base the shadow of a hope for recognition of his strange purpose—his insinuating passion.

Thus the summer months went by, with no amelioration of the depressing gloom enshrouding the minds of Cornelius Twain's anxious friends; no surcease of pain in Enid Grey's despondent heart. October came with its chill rains, and its cloak of brilliant verdure enwrapping the silent woods. The Greys and the Holts were among the last to quit the Blue Ridges. Koppinger and Bolston, having maintained an agreeable truce, so far as open expressions of their feelings were concerned, and having seen less of each other all these weeks than might be expected of two old acquaintances, departed separately, as they had come, the Englishman returning to the Capital and the senator going to New York, for the corporation boards were beginning to meet in Jersey City and Newark again.

Out in the west, in Senators Twain's state, the primaries had been held, Sloane receiving the nomination for senator. This came about in a peculiar and somewhat unexpected way. As has been said, there were two aspirants for the place—Parsons and Sloane. As the campaign progressed the people began to ask questions. If both Parsons and Sloane were the true friends of Twain that they said they were, why should either of them

seek to displace him in the Senate? And yet, Twain was not at home to personally file his petition as required under the primary law.

Now, with Dick Sheridan, the friend of Sloane, as the only aspirant for governor, the Conservatives seemed to have the advantage. Cyrus Shirley, Parsons' campaign manager, fore-saw the danger and called his chief's attention to it. A hurried conference of leaders was held, with the result that Parsons withdrew from the senatorial race and filed for governor against Sheridan, leaving Sloane a clear field.

It was extremely hard to make Parsons' many friends throughout the state see and understand that this was a wise thing to do, for there were several good federal jobs that a few of the faithful Progressives wanted, and which they would be unable to get if Parsons didn't go to the Senate. The people, by now, were recovering from their surprise on learning that, after all, the Progressives were in politics for the sake of the offices. It had long been generally supposed that only the wicked old Stalwarts would stoop to such base things, this belief being freely encouraged by the Progressive leaders themselves. But there are many surprises in politics.

Well, Cy Shirley finally made his state, county and precinct committeemen, and the Progressive editors as well, see that if Parsons defeated Sheridan for governor there would be something in it for all of them when the plum-tree came to be shaken at the state capitol in January. Besides, it was agreed that a railroad tax bill should be introduced in the legislature. This would have the effect of keeping the railroad lobby busy against the choosing of a senator.

And Shirley had another motive, but this one he said nothing about, not even to Parsons. The average person who reads these lines may not guess it, but the shrewd politician will. So I will not explain just now, because the dear average reader will

skip over this part of my story and rush on in the hope of finding more exciting things in later chapters, while my equally dear young friends who would measure the value of this volume by the amount of sentiment in it are likely to do the same thing. And the matter being easily fathomed by the politicians, why, indeed, should I dwell further upon the subject, except to repeat that Sloane got the nomination for senator, and to add that Parsons defeated Sheridan for governor? All this is very simple to those who understand or care about it.

And so the twin nuisances, the dog days and the primaries, being past, there was little to thrill the popular imagination during the next few weeks, unless it be the dubious reports sent out by brokerage houses in regard to the shortage in the grain crop at home and the longage of it abroad, or *vice versa*; it makes no difference, except to the honest trader, who believes the morning bulletins on brokers' tables that tell you the foreign market is bearish or that it is bullish, but that the gross earnings of the railroads have increased; and you buy or sell, if you are in that kind of business, and regret it, whichever you do, the next minute.

In another month, with the least amount of campaign confusion and excitement that can be imagined, considering the momentous issues involved, the great election was over, and Page Bannister was the choice for President of the Republic. Captain Mikleskoff was down from the Blue Ridge long before this. Indeed, he was at the Holt residence in Washington when the news came, and watched Margaret's face as she read the returns. He must have thought it very strange she should evince such deep interest in the result, but when she remarked that her brother Stephen had challenged her for a wager of a dozen pairs of gloves that the Conservative candidate would be elected and she had taken the bet, "just to punish Stephen for meddling in politics," which she abhorred, perforce the smitten

Russian was obliged to believe her. Still, her anxiety in behalf of her brother's tendencies gave the Captain some uneasiness, and he made pretense of condoling with her; whereat she laughed joyously.

But Margaret's exultation over the winning of the box of gloves from Stephen gave way to a feeling of great sadness when, the morning after Page Bannister's election, word came to her that Enid Grey was seriously ill. She went at once to see her, and, canceling all other engagements, remained for days at the bedside of her friend, dividing unselfishly with a trained nurse the duties belonging to the sickroom—an exhibition of friendship, indeed, only those who are stricken in body and in heart, as was this long-suffering woman, can fully appreciate. The nature of Enid's malady was not such as to give rise to immediate alarm; still, it was sufficiently grave to warn her physicians, who advised a change of scene and air for her. But this could not be effected at once; it would be unwise to undertake her removal from the bed in which she now lay in a pitiable state of physical debility and mental exhaustion.

Dame Gossip soon came to know of the Russian Captain's disturbed state of mind; whereupon society's devotees, far in advance of fact, as usual, folded their arms in patient waiting for the announcement of Margaret Holt's engagement to the President-elect. They also turned to analyzing its portentous effects upon the body politic. Again the opinions and comments of the dowager set, as when Cornelius Twain first met and was attracted to Enid Grey, found interesting expression.

"It is quite shocking even to think of it," exclaimed one of these delightful antiquaries, who was eking out an existence on the income of something like twenty-five million of dollars. This sum had been accumulated and considerably invested by her late lamented husband, who, in his day, was a prominent figure in the circles of consolidation.

"It is an alliance between democracy and decency under the banner of Altrocracy—a party that seeks to install the mob in power," she continued. "It is a foretokening of the end of Dividends, and soon one will be obliged to return to one's cast off apparel if one would maintain respectability. Whither, alas! are we drifting?"

"Be not discouraged, dear," replied a sympathetic exhibit of the glitter period. "If Margaret Holt has inherited the genius of her indefatigable father she may redeem the place of political power from the hands of the proletarian invaders and bring about the redemption of the industrial empire now threatened with dissolution."

"How fortunate, indeed," remarked a third, "if the new President, under the Holt influence, is made to realize the error of his way. In his infatuation for the charming blonde, he may forget to confiscate our property, to be distributed among the socialistic dreamers who brought about his election. May she prove to possess the wisdom of Minerva. Let us continue to hope. All is not lost."

If these delightful monitors, whose most arduous task, aside from their appointments with their milliners and as the regulators of heart throbs in Capital society, was the cutting of coupons from gilt-edged securities with diamond-studded gold scissors, were as near the mark in their predictions regarding politico-economic conditions as in their present speculations concerning Margaret Holt and Page Bannister, there would be no disturbance in business circles—none whatever.

It would not be in keeping with a few thoughts intended to be conveyed in these pages, however, if it could not be said that, with the coming of Altrocratic success, there came also a noticeable abatement in the prevailing social gatherings of those boorish displays so prominent during the heyday of glitter, sug-

gesting the competitive spirit aroused at a county fair, where prizes are awarded to the producers of abnormal vegetables.

Still, there was a modified continuation of those pleasing functions of the more refined order, where were met the notables of both sexes—women whose striking beauty, charm of manner and tasty gowns served to stir the cultivated, artistic senses, and men distinguished for the public positions of honor they occupied or upon whom other good fortune was bestowing its benignant smile.

But there were fewer diamonds or other jewels about the fair necks and arms and upon the beautiful hands of the ladies; fewer and smaller tiaras in their hair—irrefutable evidence, indeed, that “the coming of the empire” had been checked; a supporting contribution to the theory that, contrary to the views of them that fail to distinguish between artificial prosperity and actual progress, a Republic, if it is to endure, must have its Lenten season—a period of national sobriety, of mortification to the headlong passions upon which injustice and oppression are erected.

“A propitious era of simplicity,” commented my Philosopher friend. “No more do we see those hideous electric bulbs among the evergreens, destroying the beauty of nature with their garish light—a flighty whim of the decorator, forsooth! whose art consists in measuring the extent to which he may lead his patrons into the depths of showy extravagance; no wires stabbing the hearts of the roses and carnations, supporting them with a painful stiffness that leaves one to wonder if they are not imported because of their greater cost, therein, to their purchasers’ minds, excelling the natural flowers.”

“Precisely,” replied my Philosopher friend’s friend. “And you must have noticed that Mrs. Kaffir Mine has discarded from her throat the enormous gems that were rounding her plump shoulders with their weight last season.”

"It is said," answered my friend the Philosopher, "that she has converted them to cash with which to endow an astronomical institution for the education of the Esquimo, thus fitting these benighted people as competent witnesses in future polar expeditions."

"An altruistic and a most practical beneficence withal," was the reply.

CHAPTER XVII

AN ANXIOUS SKIPPER

Now, it came to pass, be it said generously and to their entire credit, that the doctors had correctly diagnosed Enid Grey's ailment, which the reader has already surmised was really of the heart, and that they had prescribed wisely in directing she be given a change of air and surroundings. Months of intense grief and almost hopeless mental agony had reduced her to a condition amounting almost to helplessness. Under the loving care of the happy, light-hearted Margaret she was up and about again, though the joy of living could never return against the great weight that was bearing her down, unless the cause of it were removed. To say the truth, Enid Grey was upon the point of permanent invalidism. How sad a lot for one so young, so talented and so beautiful! How degrading of mankind the means which brought her to this state! It was pitiful to see her in affliction, and to know that even the very many kindnesses at hand—the readiness of her parents, of all her friends, particularly of Margaret, to assist her by every possible indulgence—would fail; to know what the inevitable end must be.

In such case the ministrations of a gentle mother, the cheerful words of a fond father, are more soothing and helpful than all else. These she had as few other daughters within my acquaintance. Still, as medical men will tell you, even a very great remedy, after long use in a given disease, will lose its

potency. It was so, I fear, to some extent at least, as to the loving attentions of this devoted mother and this anxious father, who spared themselves in nowise to cheer and encourage their desponding child—for by now she was but little more than a child again; whereas, not so long since, a more complete and perfect woman it would have been difficult to find.

About this time a vague rumor came from Tampico, Mexico, that a strange man bearing some resemblance to Senator Twain had been seen, more than two months ago, at that port, in company with an officer of a tramp steamer that sailed the coasts of several southern Republics. The newspapers made much of it for a brief time, overlaying the story with big red headlines, and the little paper merchants cried their wares in the streets vociferously—"All about Sen'ter Wayne found." Similar sensational announcements were quite common, but small credence was given them. Such also was the fate of this the most recent rumor. If these reports served any purpose it was to arouse renewed hope in the breast of Enid Grey, only to have it dispelled again.

Mrs. Andrew Holt came one day and sat with Enid fully an hour, which was a long time for this good lady to give in any cause, except her own and the fashionable charities in which she indulged. It must have been a stroke of genius that prompted Margaret to bring her, for where Margaret herself gently coaxed the shadows to flee hence, her mother always compelled them to vanish precipitately.

"Enid Grey, I am surprised!"

Thus she began, after some time spent in observing the patient. Enid looked inquiringly into her serious face, a face, indeed, that denoted perspicuousness and considerable determination. It is true, no doubt, that Mrs. Andrew Holt was more practical than sentimental, and it was not so much what she said as her way of saying it that counted. 'This Enid knew before-

hand, but the good woman had never been quite so impressive as now, the invalid thought. She knew also what Mrs. Holt meant when she expressed her surprise, because, while there was much emphasis on the penultimate of the last word in the short sentence, there were no imperfect meanings about any of it; and Enid Grey was a percipient creature, too.

"I repeat," said she, after a pause that made the first remark all the more important, "that I am surprised. How very absurd, my dear, that a grown up woman like you should be sitting here or anywhere else mourning herself sick about a man."

"Gently, mamma," said Margaret. "The poor dear has been so very ill."

"Firmness is what is needed, Margaret. Think of what would have happened to you, dear, had I permitted you to mope your heart out over that Clarendon chap that afterward ran away with his nurse."

"Oh, mother, but we were only school children, and he was so badly hurt in that runaway accident—"

"I know, Margaret, my dear, but you lost interest in everything after that, and I was obliged almost to force you away. When we got back from the Caribbean you had quite recovered both your health and your reason, to be sure. Before that you were an invalid, too."

"And am I an invalid, dear Mrs. Holt?" asked Enid in a pathetic tone. She had not even imagined such a possibility until now.

"Yes, Enid; you are an invalid. The truth should be told always; besides, it is a matter that concerns you personally. If I were about to die I should want them to tell me so frankly. I would then show them that they were mistaken and get well. It's your only chance, my dear."

"But, mother, Enid is not yet at the point of death," said Margaret, laughingly.

"And if she were I cannot imagine a more unsatisfactory ending than being killed in this way, merely by love for a man."

This plain, practical talk about invalidism and death must have had the effect of arousing Enid from her trance—of calling her mind back from the clouds—for thereafter she showed greater spirit, and talked of going away to some place that would not remind her of her misery.

"I have a splendid idea, mother!" exclaimed Margaret. "We will go to the Caribbean again, and take Enid."

"Something ought to be done, to be sure; and I cannot see why we should remain here the winter through, killing ourselves with dinners, receptions and such other tomfoolery that they call society. I detest it all. Besides, Andrew is away most of the time in that awful dirigible of his. He alights here once a week, perhaps, for breakfast, and by evening is off again for the skies. And now Stephen, the reckless dear boy, has one of the things, too, and will be sailing to Perdition, I suppose, if there is such a place. The more wealth the less happiness one has, as I have so often said to Andrew."

"And the yacht is so very comfortable, mamma," suggested Margaret.

"To be sure," responded her good mother.

Then Margaret referred casually to the rumor, the subject of the big red headlines, adding that there was the possibility of learning something more definite about it when the "Penelope" reached Caribbean waters.

Mrs. Holt had not read the story—"there is so much in the newspapers that is unreliable. But," she continued, "I have even less faith in the government officials who are searching for him, or pretending to do so. To be sure, Margaret, we can be off by Monday morning, and I do hope that Mr. and Mrs. Grey will come with us."

"I am sure father and mother will be greatly pleased," said Enid.

Thus it came about that Enid Grey was to be carried to the Caribbean for her health in the famous "Penelope," the magnificent yacht of the multi-millionaire Holt. But the date that Mrs. Holt had fixed for its sailing was so near at hand, Margaret expressed some doubt about being ready by then. Perhaps she had in mind the fate of the love-lorn Russian, who, she well knew, would not permit a single precious day to pass without seeing her, that he might pour out his devotion again and again. She knew, too, he would be "terribly upset" on learning that she was going away for an indefinite period of time, and that he might even want to go with them, which she at once decided must not be thought of seriously. Still, good fortune seemed to favor her, for, even while she and her mother were leaving the Greys, Stephen came speeding along in his auto. Of course he did not know of the proposed Caribbean voyage, and, being too intent upon his own plans to hear what Margaret was about to say, he launched forth enthusiastically on his new dirigible and his wonderful navigator.

"He's a Russian, Margy, a great artist in sailing the beautiful airship, and has just been proposing that we fly to the north pole. No little sparrow flights for him—not for Ivan Petroffsky! He wants to circumscribe the whole demnition globe, and then circle her again!"

Poor Mrs. Holt. All that she could find tongue to say was, "Stephen, Stephen, you reckless boy!"

"Why not go to the pole, Stephen?" said Margaret, encouragingly. "It is strange that the Russians have not accomplished it."

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "What an opportunity for the Captain to win laurels for his government and fame for himself. I'll suggest it to him."

His interest in the new airship had not diminished the next morning, when he assured Margaret that "it's the north pole or bust. Anyway, we're going to fly in that direction, even though we do not go further than Etah. Who will know that we didn't go all the way to the pole? If anyone doubts it—well, let him go there himself and look for our footprints in the shifting snows."

When Margaret and her mother were arrived at their palatial abode near Sheridan Circle, Clairisse, the housekeeper, was summoned. Directions were given preparatory to the voyage, and the captain of the "*Penelope*" was notified to have the vessel in readiness promptly.

"I fear," said Margaret, "that poor Enid was not greatly benefitted by being told she was an invalid and that the result might be fatal to her."

"Pooh! She is in no danger of dying, nor of being an invalid either, unless by too much pampering," replied the practical lady. "An excess of sympathy, Margaret; all the world is bemoaning her fate in the loss of her lover. I saw at a glance that what she needed was to be aroused to her own predicament, her mind diverted from him. Of course I pity her, for she is a very sweet girl, but pity will not cure her heartache nor bring him back. There is such a thing as common sense."

Ah! but the good lady did not know the heart of Enid Grey. How could she know it? In her own girlhood she had spent much time day-dreaming of wealth, more than of love; and when she married Andrew Holt it was after satisfying herself that he was the one man who could contribute to her sordid aspirations. Her dreams had now been realized in the fullest, and much more; but great wealth had long since begun to pall upon her, and the only little happinesses coming to her in these her days of affluence were such as I have already indicated—

directing the affairs of others and contributing to dubious small charities.

"Besides," she continued, "I've been thinking of what the papers said. I believe he is in Mexico, and that we shall find him there. Who knows but that he is ill, more so than Enid, perhaps, and needs our help? To be sure, we must provide everything for his comfort. The patient sufferer must be famished for want of something good to eat," exclaimed the generous woman. "I am surprised that he is alive. Those Mexicans live on peppers, corn meal, game cocks and maguey. Think of feeding a sick man on those fighting birds with their long steel spurs and their bleeding heads. Ugh!"

Whereupon Mrs. Holt touched a button. This brought her housekeeper, who was again directed to get everything ready, and see to it that there was a liberal supply of fresh fowl, jams, jellies, pickles, hot-water bottles, an alcohol stove, a rubber bath tub, sponges, towels, coarse and fine.

"Do not omit anything, Clairisse, that an invalid should have about him, if he is to get well. Your experience as a nurse will help you greatly in procuring what is needed." And Clairisse put in many things that even her mistress did not enumerate.

"Game cocks, indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Holt, addressing Margaret. "It's barbarous! For meat, if he gets meat at all, I suppose he is obliged to depend upon the trophies of the bull ring. Ballooning, bull baiting and cock fighting! What a world we're living in, Margaret."

And if the "Penelope's" hold was not amply stored with extra provisions when the yacht sailed away on Monday morning, it was not the fault of the thoughtful Mrs. Holt.

Captain Mikleskoff was at the pier, and fanned the frosty breezes with his white silk handkerchief until the yacht was out of his sight. Margaret was on the deck in the meantime, and

was quite sure he used it also and repeatedly at his eyes. She almost reproached herself for downright cruelty.

And now, in furtherance of my original intention that truth should be the presiding genius of this tale, nor partiality, flattery, exculpation nor deception to mar it, the fact must be recorded that Ralph Bolston and John Koppinger, leaving Captain Mikleskoff solitary and alone on the "Penelope's" pier, rode away together for their accustomed haunts in the city. Neither of them attached the least weight to the story from Mexico, and they quite agreed that Mrs. Holt's ardor was due entirely to her woman's way of persuading Enid Grey to go abroad—a pretext, indeed, for which they commended her.

But they were scarcely settled in their places—the Englishman in the chancery of the British Embassy and the senator in his committee-room at the Capitol—when they were summoned forthwith to the White House; for only a few minutes after the "Penelope" sailed away for the south a queer visitor called upon the President, and he came on an unusual errand. The President was alone, and found it difficult to conceal his astonishment that the very strict rules in regard to the reception of strangers should have been overcome by this unusual visitor, or any visitor, at that particular hour.

"I come by the cars, yer honor, as quick as I could, so I could tell you I didn't know he was stole."

"To whom and to what do you refer, sir?" was the President's somewhat severe inquiry.

"That senator what I took south on the 'Myranda.' "

"Do you mean Senator Twain?" asked the President, making an effort at composure.

"That's what the paper said his name was."

"And you carried him to Mexico?"

"But I didn't steal him, yer honor. He got aboard, somehow, and I didn't know it till we was in the Lower Chesapeake

next day. Then he comes on deck and says as how he was hungry and wouldn't be carried for nothing, and paid me a fine sum, yer honor, which I don't want. Here it is."

He threw a roll of bills on the big mahogany desk. Then he went on:

"I meant no wrong, yer honor; didn't know what the game was till I got round to Galveston months after and read the paper about how the trusts stole him. So I jumps to the train as quick as I could, not wantin' the sins of them tarnation things on *my* soul. Besides, stealin' people is bad business, yer honor; that's how mine was took. I know the feelin'."

"And what is your name?"

"Noggins—John Noggins—Captain John Noggins, of the 'Myranda.' "

The President touched a button; he touched it with unusual vigor. His secretary came in haste.

"Get Chief Bostwick, Mr. Grey, or Senator Koppinger, or Mr. Bolston right off," he whispered. "Lose no time about it." Then, turning to Noggins, he said pleasantly: "Sit down, Captain."

Noggins looked around the room, in doubt as to which seat to take. Indeed, the seats were so big and soft-looking that he hesitated about taking a seat at all. When he did sit down, in a most cautious manner, his two hundred and odd pounds sank deeply into the wide, springy upholstered chair, and his short legs would not permit his feet to touch the floor. He struggled to rise, but seemed only to sink deeper into the Russia leather.

"Make yourself comfortable," said the President, when he observed the Captain's embarrassment.

"Thank you all the same, yer honor, but this thing's kind o' choppy, like a Caribbean sou'wester blowin' up Hatteras way."

The President directed his messenger to admit Senators Baxter and Halsey, who were waiting outside. The two senators,

notwithstanding the fact that the scarlet press, whether rightfully or wrongfully, had involved them in a cloud of suspicion, were welcome visitors at the White House. The President knew them; the general public did not. They remained not to exceed two minutes. Then other senators and several members came in turn to discuss affairs of state with the chief executive. "Affairs of state" is a high-sounding newspaper expression. When a senator or member discusses affairs of state at the White House there is an impression outside of Washington that he must wear a high hat and Prince Albert coat, and that he looks wise and consequential. But Baxter and Halsey wore short coats and Derby hats on this occasion; they were in workaday habit. And it was unnecessary for them to look wise and consequential; their status in this regard had been fixed long ago. Indeed, they were born statesmen. This is a great advantage to those who would enter on public life. Not all the men who find their way to Washington as legislators are thus endowed. Nor did these distinguished senators talk about affairs of state; they only discussed the tariff—the duty on paper, perhaps, which they were in favor of increasing, the President's objections to the contrary notwithstanding.

"Them fellers do business mighty quick, yer honor," said Noggins, when the official callers had gone. "I've seen their pictu'rs in the paper many a time; feel almost acquainted with 'em. That's the way I knowed you. Hope I ain't introodin', yer honor."

"Not at all, Captain. Make yourself at home," replied the President as he proceeded to sign his name to a batch of important commissions for a number of gentlemen just appointed to office.

Noggins then fell to wondering how he happened to get into such big company so very easily, and how different these men were from his former conception of them. There were others

coming and going when he arrived at the White House, and somehow he just drifted in through the ante-rooms with senators and members, as if he had been a constituent of one of them, until he found himself decidedly mixed up among the statesmen. When the door of the President's private office room was opened by the messenger and was left considerably ajar, while the messenger stepped over to Senator Baxter to say the President would see him in a few minutes, Noggins didn't hesitate to walk directly in through the narrow opening. Before the messenger could halt him he had arrived at the President's desk and was talking. Of course no one familiar with the rules would have done so; but this was Noggins' first visit at the White House.

The President certainly was surprised; yet Noggins wasn't abashed the least particle. It had been a habit of his to go straight to headquarters with important problems. This was one of the most important he had ever met with. Therefore, when he read in the Galveston newspaper of the strange occurrence, he took the next train for Washington, first directing the mate, when he sobered up and the "*Myranda*" had taken on cargo, to proceed to other ports.

And so Koppinger and Bolston being summoned to the White House, Grey having gone south, as we have seen, and Bostwick being out of town, the President, holding the attention of Captain Noggins of the "*Myranda*," awaited them. The old skipper's story was soon told.

"And what did you do with him, sir?" asked Bolston of Noggins, in a tone somewhat severe, and, as the Captain must have thought, indicating authority.

"I didn't do anything with him, yer honor," replied the skipper, deferentially. "He quit the old tub at Tampico and shipped on a little coastwiser running up Chorreras way. I've been there, sir, and know the place?"

"Would you recognize him, do you think, if you should happen to meet him?"

"If I seen 'em I would, sure, and he give me his photograft that was took by Howser, the 'Myranda' clerk, one day. Here it is."

There was now no room for further doubt, and the next train carried Ralph Bolston, Doctor Richardson, Captain John Noggins and Neill Sproat, one of Bostwick's secret service officers, to the south. They were ticketed for Galveston. By direction of the President, a small cruiser of antiquated pattern, then at New Orleans, was ordered to be in readiness to receive them and to remain under Bolston's direction.

So intent was he upon following the clew, the Englishman had not time even to advise Grey of the good news. John Koppinger, however, attended to this duty, as it had been his wont in the past to lose no opportunity in manifesting his interest.

Noggins was an affable old sea dog; not so old either—fifty or less. He had had two wives—not at the same time, although both were alive, as he supposed. One, the first one, had asked for and secured separation and had then married a planter. The other was in Mexico, the Captain did not know in what particular part. She had gone there six years ago with another man, without the due formality of a divorce from John Noggins, by whom she had one child. Mrs. Noggins took the child with her. Noggins followed them to Mexico, but after an extended and arduous search for the child failed to find her. During the search he was at Chorreras and other points along the Mexican coast. He would soon be on familiar ground, he said to Bolston, who must have thought it strange he should have known about Chorreras before. This fact raised vagrant doubts in the cautious Englishman's mind, but they were soon dispelled.

"To whom does the 'Myranda' belong?" asked Bolston as they sat together in the Pullman sleeper.

"She's mine for the most part."

"Would you like to sell her?"

"Never! She's all I've got. A man has to have something to love, or he wouldn't have any trouble; I've got no wife. I am married to the old tub. I call her Susie, to myself."

"Why Susie?" asked Bolston.

"That's the bobby's name."

Then Noggins went to the other end of the coach. In a few minutes Bolston passed that way. The Captain was drying his eyes with his big red handkerchief.

All doubt as to Noggins' sincerity was now at rest. He had a heart. It was bleeding for the loss of his only child, as Enid Grey's was bleeding for that of her lover. Bolston was relieved; thereafter he did not hesitate in his confidences when talking with the Captain of the "Myranda."

Besides, he liked him for other reasons. The Captain was terse of speech. He could put a whole paragraph into one sentence and a good volume into a paragraph. It was different with Grey, Bolston mused; not that he found fault with the editor for anything. On the contrary, he admired him for everything. Yet, where Noggins had related the essential event in his life's history in less than five minutes, it had taken the man Grey two hours or more to tell of Autocracy and Altrocracy. Still, these were widely separated questions; likewise, there was a mighty difference in temperament and aspiration between Arthur Grey and John Noggins.

Again, Grey was an editor, a newspaper writer. His style was formal and inclined to profundity. The editorial style of writing grows upon one, and if one is not watchful large words will begin to crowd out the smaller ones. Grey's style of talking expanded in the same way. It was so unlike a banker's

style, for instance, who would say: "We have money to loan. Note must be indorsed. Ten per cent."

If it were Grey instead of the banker, he would insist upon telling why he had money to loan, why the note must be indorsed, why the rate of interest was ten per cent. This seems to be necessary, because not everyone is able to read between lines. And Grey's recital would possess literary merit; it would have an intellectual instead of a metallic ring, like the banker's. So it is that I have given him, along with the Philosopher, much space in these chapters, for he was dealing with the greatest question of this selfish age.

The tedium of the dusty journey to Galveston was greatly relieved by the Captain's quaint expressions and his amusing description of his visit to the White House.

"Was them the law-makin' crew that come in afore you and yer friend hove in sight?" he asked Bolston.

"They were senators and members, I suppose."

"A trim-rigged fleet they was fer sure," added Noggins. "They talked most about postoffices. I reckon they'd lost some billy doos in the mails. They're a smilin' lot. Maybe they was laughin' at me, rollin' there in the trough of that big leather barge. And the commodore he was smilin' broad and sweet, like he was glad they dropped anchor alongside o' him."

"That's his nature, Captain," replied Doctor Richardson, who enjoyed Noggins immensely.

"Don't he ever blow a gale and pipe squally at 'em?"

"Not during office hours when the statesmen are calling; but he is less considerate of them in his messages to Congress, where they are afraid to talk back at him, for that would jeopardize their hold upon the patronage. Besides, the senator or member that is not in executive favor in Washington, is usually out of favor with his constituents at home."

All this was Greek to Noggins; still, he replied: "Well, his

honor couldn't navigate the 'Myranda' that way; he'd bust his bilers afore he got out o' port. Must have a patent steam chest and his guvnors tied down."

CHAPTER XVIII

"A PLAY WITHIN A PLAY"

The time is not yet come for us to further examine the secretive mind of Andy Akers, nor at this point to devote additional space to exploiting the ruminations of Sam Ives and Eph Fox. Suffice it to say, then, that, although Dick Bostwick was assiduously watching the movements of Mr. Akers, which Andy well knew, it is most likely he was in a condition of greater serenity than were the two gentlemen aforesaid, to wit: Ives and Fox; for, be it said again, their apprehensions of disagreeable disclosures closely concerning themselves continued to multiply—so much so, indeed, they deemed it necessary to dispatch one of the Guild to spy upon Bolston's movements. If Akers had really planned to prevent the return of Twain, and the searching party should find him and discover the plot, the most serious complications might ensue; the first offense could easily be overshadowed by the last one.

So that when the searching party were leaving Galveston, being on board the cruiser, an old pleasure yacht attracted Noggins' attention. It was steaming slowly outward. He knew the vessel as one that had been in disuse for many months—not that it was unseaworthy; it had been out of commission on account of the death of its former owner. It was now the property of Sam Oakley, the former owner's son and heir. Noggins recognized young Oakley, who, with glass in hand, was

standing on the deck closely inspecting the government vessel, or those abroad of her. He showed unusual interest.

The next morning, after a night's sail from Galveston, Oakley's craft was again in sight. This fact disturbed Noggins, and when at the end of the day the yacht was still hovering near, he spoke to Bolston about it.

"The young feller's in bad as to morals," he said. "Would like to be a sort of Captain Kidd, or something stagey. He's short o' brains, but devilish."

So it was arranged that Noggins should remain on board the cruiser to keep an eye on Oakley, while Bolston, Sproat and the Doctor went ashore at Chorreras.

Here was a quaint town, if so much it could be called—not to exceed twenty adobe houses, mere huts. There was also a church of the same material, a small structure with a very large bell, whose tones must have been greatly restrained, for it was almost buried in a deep alcove in the facade above the door.

Bolston always considered it a piece of good fortune that the pleasant-faced old padre—whom Giorgione and Titian would have been delighted to paint—came out of the church as he, the Doctor and Sproat were passing by. He knew the French almost as well as the Spanish language, the padre did. Thus the Englishman was enabled to learn that, although it was several months back, a strange man, after remaining a week in Chorreras, had gone away; that he was accompanied by Pierre Sanchez, as interpreter and guide; that the strange man, whose description answered quite accurately, as given by the padre, to that of Senator Twain, had taken a westerly course toward the San Madre mountains.

"It was an unusual way he came to get to the Capital," suggested the padre.

"And he gave me this," interrupted a bright-faced blue-eyed girl of nine years, perhaps—so white and fair as to be in

marked contrast with the curious natives now gathering about the group. She was with the padre, standing in the church doorway. “I hope he did not take it wrongfully from the bank,” she added sorrowfully.

“No, he did not,” said the Doctor, examining the souvenir. “It is an American piece, five dollars, gold.”

“Oh, I am so glad!” she exclaimed. She talked English almost perfectly. Her mother had been a teacher in a Louisiana parish school, before her marriage, so Noggins afterward told the Doctor.

“What is your name?” inquired Bolston.

“Susie.”

“Sanchez’ girl,” remarked the padre. “She is with me until her father returns.”

“Have you no mother?” asked Bolston.

“She is dead,” replied the child, crossing herself and genuflecting.

Returning to the launch, after some inquiries about the roads leading west, they descried the Oakley yacht approaching the cruiser. When they boarded the war vessel the pleasure craft was moored alongside. Oakley was talking with Noggins over the taffrail. Bolston heard Oakley say:

“Looking for that stray senator?” he asked. “Well, you’ll never find him here. Don’t waste your time in these parts. He’s on the other side of the globe before now.”

Oakley assumed to know what the cruiser’s mission was, and approached the subject directly and in a confident tone, so that Noggins could not evade, if he would.

“And why be you in these bilge waters?” inquired Noggins.

“Fishing,” answered Oakley.

“It is better far north this season of the year, up where Cook and Peary said they went,” was the Captain’s reply.

Oakley did not respond to Noggins’ suggestion, but suddenly

changed the subject back to the quest of Twain. Yes, Noggins was right; Oakley was a weakling, "short o' brains." He could not help showing that he was no match for stronger minds. His anxiety to discuss the abduction betrayed his purpose in following the cruiser.

There was now no doubt that he belonged to the Consolidators' Guild. His father before him had been a leading member of it—the dominant force, in fact, in a corporation that controlled a vast chain of railroads in the south, several chains, indeed, with a perfect network of branch lines. The consolidation of all the lines had taken place in defiance of law, and, although the courts had decided against the merger, the elder Oakley, through a great financial concern in New York, had managed to get possession of a majority of the stock of the competing lines, thus overcoming the effect of the supreme court's decision.

Young Oakley had been reared in the belief that it was the legitimate part of railway managers and promoters of consolidation to evade and disobey the statutes of their country. His regard for the processes of judicial tribunals extended no further than his ability to evade them. In his estimation, a judge who insisted upon following the letter and spirit of the law was unfit for the bench. Like most of his kind, he was bigoted, intolerant and tyrannical. If the Guild had deemed it necessary to corrupt the ballot, suborn witnesses, buy juries or abduct a senator, it had his approval of the offense and could depend upon his coöperation. Still, in his new capacity as the successor of his father, he would be short lived in the railroad world; for already the wolves of Wall Street had marked him as their prey, and were now about ready to sit down to the feast.

Whoever engaged him to shadow the searchers must have been aware beforehand that the cruiser had been ordered to pick them up at Galveston. In choosing Oakley to represent them

they were even less discreet than when they conceived the greater outrage, as we shall presently see.

Oakley's yacht was now steaming leisurely to the south. Bolston had come up from below, and he and Noggins were watching the disappearing craft.

"Fishin' in these waters *now!*!" exclaimed the Captain, contemptuously. "More like he's anglin' for somethin' that ain't got scales on."

"What, for instance?" asked Bolston.

"Somethin' to tattle."

"To whom?"

"Them as sent him—I don't know. We'll get it afore he's gone. He'll cruise 'round hereabouts, if we don't stop him."

Bolston was of a like conviction. Then he changed the subject by asking:

"Had you known that the 'Myranda' was carrying a man put on your vessel surreptitiously, what would you have done?"

"Carried him back to his friends," was the prompt reply.

"After taking his money?"

"Money's nuthin' to me, not that kind, and I don't like stealin' people. That's how mine went. I know the feelin'."

"Your wife?" inquired Bolston.

"And Susie," added Noggins, sadly.

Bolston, Noggins, the Doctor and Sproat, then going ashore, were making the launch fast to a dilapidated pier, when the old padre came along. Pierre Sanchez' girl was with him. The Englishman was watching the Captain, who was in the boat putting at the propeller, which was fouled with seaweed. When Noggins looked up and saw the padre and his companion, he gasped an exclamation of astonishment, dropping limply into the bottom of the launch.

"The poor man is sick!" said the girl in a voice full of sympathy.

"No, my—my little girl! Not sick! Not sick," he muttered, staring at her in dazed fashion. "I—I only hurt my hand on the wheel."

"Oh, let me see!"

She got into the launch, made her way to the seat near him and sat down. Bolston engaged the padre in conversation as he and the priest followed Sproat and the Doctor up the sandy incline toward the village.

"It is not bad hurt; it does not bleed," said the girl, gently laying her hand on his.

"No, no, my child! It is well now. You have made it well."

"But I've done nothing."

"Yes, everything, but you don't know."

"Of course; I don't know your name."

"No—yes! You was young then."

"I'm eight, soon to be nine."

"I knowed it! I knowed it! And your mother?"

"Poor mama is dead two years now. Papa is away."

Noggins closed his eyes as if to dispel a painful picture or shut out a wicked thought.

"And you?" he inquired, after a pause.

"Oh, I live with the good padre."

"He is kind to you?"

"Oh, yes, very kind."

"Bless him! Bless him! Come," said he, "we will go to the village. They're waitin'."

John Noggins' sagacity prompted him not to further disclose the feelings which were now struggling for complete expression. To give them vent might balk the only purpose of his life.

They strolled through the village, she and Noggins and the rest, for some time, making numerous inquiries of the padre. Arriving at the little church, Noggins motioned the English-

man aside. When they were behind the adobe structure he clutched his arm with his powerful hand and was about to speak.

“It is Susie, your daughter,” interrupted the Englishman. “I knew it this morning, and brought you here so that you might see for yourself.”

“You don’t know what you have done for me, Mr. Bossun,” exclaimed the Captain. “My life is yours, and the old tub, too, if you want ‘er.”

“I congratulate you on your good fortune,” replied Bolston. “Now, the cruiser will go south at once. You will stay here with her and keep watch.” Then Bolston, the Doctor and Sproat went abroad, leaving Noggins with Susie. After all, there is an occasional ray of light even in the darkest night of sorrow.

Early the next morning the cruiser anchored off San Enrique, forty leagues to the south. Here, too, when daybreak came, was the yacht. Oakley was still angling—for fish without scales.

During the next ten days the searchers covered the uninviting country far into the foothills and valleys, wherever horses could go. Sproat could speak the native tongue; yet those of whom inquiry was made evinced such reserve—or was it wariness?—that his efforts were unsatisfying. The persistent Englishman felt certain that the quarry was near, or had been near, and that certain wise natives were misleading him. At the end of a week’s search Bolston fell ill. Then they returned to San Enrique. He was suffering from climatic fever.

He had left instructions for the cruiser to go back to Choreras from time to time for news from Noggins. On its second trip it brought the Captain—and Susie.

“It’s all regular, Mr. Bossun,” exclaimed Noggins. “She’s

mine! Our principal business now is to find the senator. I'll tell you later how it happened."

Noggins had been ashore at San Enrique while waiting for the searching party, and had met an old Spanish sailor who talked a little English. From him he obtained a clew. An Americano had come into the town early in the fall and sailed for the south. So, by sunrise the next morning the cruiser was in the harbor of Tampico.

Bolston's condition made it necessary for him to remain on board and the Doctor, too. By nightfall Noggins and Sproat were convinced that the man had sailed again on the coastwise vessel that runs to Chorreras. No great number of people go to Chorreras, only a few traders, now and then a govement official or two. The principal passenger traffic is no further north than San Enrique, and this is so limited the steamship agent remembers everyone that applies for transportation. The man in question attracted his particular attention. Besides, the stranger had American money. The bills were quite new, just like some that Noggins had left on the President's big desk at the White House.

"Now, I'll tell you about Susie," said Noggins, as he sat by Bolston's bunk in the cramped cabin of the cruiser. "It's a short story. I bought her from the padre—I mean I made a contribution to the church! When I said that I was John Noggins she remembered that her mother, just before she died, told her about me. The padre was there and heard it. After that it was easy."

The cruiser was now well out in the Caribbean, steaming aimlessly nor'nor'east. She was no longer shadowed by Oakley, for one morning between San Enrique and Chorreras, when Susie was with Noggins, a shrieking projectile across the yacht's bow had served as a notice to the rich man's heir that the fishing season was closed. It might have been an accidental shot;

yet it was a suggestive warning to Oakley that his purpose was understood, and Noggins made it plainer a few minutes later.

Oakley was duly indignant. How dare anyone insult the son and heir of a dead railroad magnate who had had the brain power to consolidate many thousand miles of line and put a car-load of common stock to par on the Exchange? How dare anyone send a shell booming so near his pleasure yacht? So, as Noggins went on to tell the story, the craft was headed for the cruiser, which slowed down that Oakley might come up.

"What do you mean?" he shouted at the officer on the cruiser's bridge. The officer did not answer.

"What do *you* mean hangin' 'round all the time?" demanded Noggins.

"None of your damnation business."

"The same to you," replied Noggins, "and many of 'em."

"I'll fix you for this, you old pirate!"

"Like you fixed that poor gal what you got tired of and they couldn't find in Galveston harbor? Maybe the 'old pirate' hain't testified in court yet, but maybe 'tain't too late. Go home, boy, and larn to be good."

Oakley paled, even through his sea-bronzed complexion. Then the yacht dropped away and was soon out of sight. It never came back.

"I don't know nuthin' 'bout the gal," said Noggins to the officer, "but I know that scamp Oakley. They never found the body. But you'll not see him 'round here any more."

Bolston's health improved, but his mind was troubled. Thus far the expedition had been a failure, in so far as any recent trace of Twain was concerned. True, Susie had been restored to her real father, and that was no small compensation. So, after a consultation, it was decided to return to San Enrique again, and the cruiser's course was now laid in that direction.

How comforting, especially to John Noggins, to have Susie

on board. And how she made inquiries concerning the big world that she had never seen. Her interest in the little war vessel and its well-drilled and white-appareled officers and crew absorbed her completely. She soon knew all about the turrets, the funnels, the tubes and the torpedoes.

"I like this boat," she exclaimed, "but I don't like its killing people. That's very cruel. People are made to be alive and be good. You won't hurt Papa Sanchez, will you? He wouldn't hurt you, Papa Noggins."

The old sailor had his doubts. He also had a heart, and promised Susie that Sanchez should not be injured.

At San Enrique Susie was placed temporarily with Senora Guerrero, wife of Don José Guerrero, Alcalde of the village. They lived in a large, quaint stone house surrounded by great palms and other tropical growths. It was on a hill back of the village, and Noggins said, after leaving Susie there, that the prettiest woman he ever saw lived in it. Yet those in quest of Senator Twain were not searching for women.

By this time the "Penelope," now in wireless touch with the cruiser, was sailing toward San Enrique with its interesting invalid and the rest; the millionaire's yacht would be there at the end of another two days. But before that time the cruiser's crew made the somewhat startling discovery that Pierre Sanchez was in town. This information was vouchsafed later to *el hombre principal* by the Honorable Alcalde, who showed the visitors much attention, making an official call upon them at the village clerk's office, where most strangers repaired to rest themselves, there being no hotel, or other public place where this might be done, unless it be the plaza, where there were no seats on which to lounge, as in like resorts in the States. Besides, on this particular morning, the air was damp and chill.

"Don't let me see that —— breed, Mr. Bossun," said Nog-

gins after learning that Sanchez was in town. "If you do I'll have to kill him, maybe."

"And if I did, he would fall dead with fright, probably," laughed the Englishman.

Here, then, were the two husbands of Betsy Blake, now eternally asleep behind the adobe church at Chorreras—the two fathers of little Susie Noggins. Pierre had been a handsome fellow. He was big and strong and had piercing black eyes. Perhaps the comely Betsy was partly to blame, with her Heaven-blue orbs.

"Just like her mother's," the Captain replied, at Chorreras, when Bolston spoke of Susie's pretty eyes. "And the white skin too. Her mouth and nose?—they are mine, thank the Lord for that much!"

Two husbands did we say? It was even so; the padre had insisted upon her marriage to Sanchez four years ago, for Susie would soon grow up and come to know the painful circumstances that so closely concerned her innocent life. Of course the marriage wasn't lawful; yet the padre didn't know—not until just before she died, when she confessed to him and told Susie who her real father was.

"Just like her," sighed Noggins. "I forgive her everything after that, and now that Susie is mine again."

Although it adds to my already long list of characters, Susie does not deserve to be omitted. And, now that she must appear, why not at Chorreras as well as at any other place? Besides, isn't it good to have breathed life into such an one and to make her heart glad with meeting her real father? The Senora, too—there are many like her. Strangely enough, they always prefer to remain in seclusion. But you will know her quite well henceforward, and her charming daughter, also, whose name is Juanita. These new faces persist in revealing themselves to my susceptible imagination—like ghosts coming

to remind me that this is an oft-told tale. Still, we may forgive them for crowding themselves in upon us, as they are very estimable persons. I do not object, do you? And as for this being an oft-told tale, what novelist ever undertook to prescribe for the heartaches of men and women and succeeded in telling an entirely new story?

Well, the good "Penelope" came in due time, after Pierre Sanchez had related his peculiar experiences as the guide of poor Twain, who, traveling for days through the cactus-veiled hills, fording or swimming swollen arroyos and sleeping fitfully at night on sand dunes or in swamps, arrived, finally, at San Enrique. Here he dismissed his guide, and, vouchsafing no purpose in doing so, sailed on a vagrant sloop bound for nowhere. This happened in September, about the time that Sloane was chosen at the primary election to succeed Twain in the Senate. To follow him further would be fruitless, in the opinion of Bolston, who also opined that, in view of the missing senator's erratic peregrinations during the past summer, as likely as not he might turn up again at San Enrique, even in December or January, for the Christmas holidays were now at hand; for which the sparse population of San Enrique were thankful. Never before had they received so many or such rare presents as came now, and liberally, too, from the "Penelope's" hold, by direction of her generous commodore, Mrs. Holt.

And whether the nimbus of fame is to envelop the receding brow of Samuel Sloane after he takes his seat in the Senate; whether the multitude is forever to abide pernicious slander, accepting as gospel truth all that it reads in the scarlet press, be it ever so plausible—for the greater the plausibility in such cases the more yellow untruth becomes; whether Mrs. Farnum's question, when she sat with one pink foot curled up under her and asked Andy Akers, who was sipping stale beer and lunching on midnight lobster, if he had done the deed, and he replied

saying he was sleepy, is ever to be answered at all—whether, I repeat, any of these is to happen, even so, the altruistic and patriotic Americanos now at San Enrique will pursue their bent, laughing, sighing, weeping, to the end, relying for guidance and good fortune upon the Immutable.

CHAPTER XIX

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM DISTURBED

It would be taxing the credulity of my readers altogether too far if I chose to tell them that even after Captain Noggins left Washington, having relieved himself from all taint of suspicion in the matter; after his visit to the White House, and after the departure of the searchers for Mexico—all the world knowing these facts and believing, too, that Senator Twain had been forcibly compelled to go upon the “Myranda,” which then proceeded to carry him away—it would be as if there were no question whatsoever about your gullibility, dear reader, to say nothing of my audacious boldness, should I ask your acceptance of the unreasonable theory that, with all these things happening, and Andy Akers’ admission to Bolston that he himself was the abductor, yet, nevertheless, the said Akers, whose regular habits have heretofore been adverted to, had not as yet been taken into custody. It would also be a reflection upon the vigilance, if not the probity, of Dick Bostwick.

Hence, without further delay, the fact might as well be told that on the same day the graceful “Penelope” dropped anchor in the offing below San Enrique, Mr. Akers was put in jail in Washington.

The surprising part of it was that he laughed so heartily over the matter Chief Bostwick felt as if, after all, he had made a mistake, a most ludicrous mistake at that; for, in truth, while

the process was not unlike others upon which better men even than Andy Akers had been locked up—a mere “information and belief”—yet Dick Bostwick had never felt quite as cheaply on like occasions as he did on this one, wholly on account of Andy’s convulsive merriment.

Nor did this cease when Eva came in great trepidation to console her husband, until, finally, she, too, broke into audible smile; declaring upon her honor that, but for her positive knowledge of Andy’s absolute sanity, she would now know him to be altogether and hopelessly crazy.

“Crazy!” exclaimed Andy, slapping his knees with his stubby hands and rocking to and fro on the edge of the narrow iron bedstead in his cell, continuing to indulge in excessive mirthfulness. “Crazy!” he shouted again. “Well, Eva, my own honey bunch, if your Andy is crazy, *what's the matter with Sam Ives?* Ha! ha! ha! In the classical phrase of a Maine delegate, answering an inquiry from an Ohio delegate out in St. Louis in 1896, ‘everything's the matter with him!’ Poor old Mark! I wish he were here now to laugh with me. How he would enjoy it.” Then, his face taking on a serious expression: “Quite a while ago, Eva, you asked me if I did it, and I was too sleepy to answer. I’m wide awake now, as you see. Yes, Eva, I did it, and they don’t dare bring me to court. You tell ’em so, Eva; defy them, —— ’em. Your Andy’s no coward, but I know some who are, Eva, and they ain’t yet locked up.”

It was true, as opined by Akers, that there were those not under lock and key at that moment who were much more unhappy than he. For the present it will be necessary to deal somewhat with one of these—the Honorable William Giddings, whose name, be it remembered, has not been mentioned by Akers for a long time, not since he referred to the former legislator and present associate of Sam Ives as “a fool, and a cheap one at that.”

Now, when Chief Bostwick arrived at B——, far out in the middle west, even beyond St. Louis, where the Farnum had sipped special vintage with Fox, Bill Giddings was at home. He had been there only a few hours, coming directly from the great metropolis, the center of financial power and incorporated wisdom. The business that had taken Giddings to see Sam Ives in New York pertained to the last conference he had had with Andy Akers in Washington, when Akers made the somewhat startling announcement that Twain would not come back, and even Giddings had been shocked by the suggestion.

This announcement had been conveyed by Giddings to Ives, by Ives to Fox, and by Fox to Roberts, the legal adviser of troubled consolidators. After this, Giddings started home. On the way he read of the arrest of Andy Akers, and before he had quite recovered from the shock this piece of news occasioned, he received a dispatch directing him to return at once to New York. It was from Ives.

If the author of the message had misgivings in regard to Giddings' nerve and his fund of fortitude under trying circumstances he didn't betray them when Giddings and he were in his room at the hotel. Quite to the contrary.

Still, it was good to see Giddings again, he declared, and to look him in the eye. Until now Ives had not thought to tell Giddings of the great compliment he had paid him when he told Fox some weeks back that he (Giddings) was the truest and most steadfast friend he had ever known. Giddings thanked him for this expression of confidence.

"But who is Fox?" he queried.

"Fox?" exclaimed Ives. "Why, you know Fox."

"Never saw him in my life." And this was strictly within the bounds of truth.

"You know of him, of course."

"Never heard of him."

This was not the truth. It was so far from it that Ives had no difficulty whatever in seeing the point. After a short silence he walked over to where Giddings sat and patted him affectionately on the back.

"Of course you never did, old man! What am I talking about, anyway? I have so many things on my mind I get them all mixed up sometimes."

"As I said to a certain party in Washington recently," remarked Giddings, nonchalantly, "when he asked me if I knew Sam Ives, 'Never heard of the man,' I said. 'Who is he?' And the other man said, 'I don't know.' "

In the art of improvisation the honors were now about equal, and Ives breathed much more easily; Giddings' fable pleased him. Confidence being thus restored, he and Giddings talked further—concerning matters and men they both knew about. To be more exact, they talked freely of Akers' arrest and then spoke of the consolidators' lawyer and his strange, persistent reference to the important part that Martha Giddings might be called upon to play in the "tragedy."

"Did he refer to it as a tragedy?" asked Giddings.

Ives nodded his head affirmatively.

"Well, it won't be a tragedy if Twain comes back, now that he is in a fair way of being found," replied Giddings.

"And now that the man who said he wouldn't come back has been locked up," added Ives.

Giddings was startled by the remark. Locked up! In his apprehensive ears he seemed to hear the prison door as it turned gratingly on its rusty hinges. Neither of them spoke for several minutes. Every minute seemed like an hour to both of them. Perhaps Ives had heard the same noise that startled Giddings.

When the latter boarded the train for the west that night he had received fresh instructions from Ives; but at no time in

his precarious, erring career had he ever cared so little about arriving at B——; nor had his purpose ever before been quite as indefinite, uncertain, as now.

So, as has been said, when Bostwick arrived Giddings was at home.

Now, the Chief of the Capital's detective service had never before been as far west as B——; he was a stranger in a strange place. Yet, the streets were named and numbered and the town supported a city directory. Giddings' name, the name of the street and the number of his house were all in the directory. During the afternoon the Chief walked leisurely through the town. He saw many fine homes. Western folk are given to these luxuries.

One of these homes belonged to Bill Giddings, so the directory indicated. On the broad front porch, in the cool shade of a blue-striped awning, sat a young woman, who had just turned her twentieth year. She was pretty; one might say she was almost beautiful. I will leave it with you, dear reader: Blond hair, fair skin, very fair, violet-blue eyes, statuesque figure, vivacious; marvelous freshness of cheek and ripe redness of lip. Isn't it the picture of a beautiful woman? Is it any wonder that it should have commanded the admiration of Ephraim Fox, even though he was more than twice as old as she? And yet, disparity in years, as in this case, is said to add to some men's susceptibilities; therefore, it were the part of charity not to judge Fox too harshly.

In a rocker near by, smiling, swinging to the rhythm of a topical song the two were singing, sat a gentleman of thirty summers, perhaps, one much nearer her own age, it will be observed. He, too, was prepossessing; he was handsome. When the song ended the gentleman leaned forward, his face close to hers. He was now talking earnestly to her. Bostwick did not hear what he said, nor her whispered answers, for

both voices, only a moment ago quite audible, were now subdued, low-toned, and the loving words were not for ears other than their own. It is the old, old story, mused the Chief, who was now sorry that he had come to B——; for here was a "young dream" that was destined to have an early awakening.

A little later, while Bostwick was fanning himself with his straw hat and standing in the shade of a wide-branched and broad-leaved tree at the corner of the square on which the house stood, the handsome young man rose from the rocker, took the girl's small white hands in his, looked affectionately into her eyes for quite awhile, and then came away.

"Be ready on time, Martha; the curtain goes up promptly at eight." This was said in a tone that Bostwick could easily hear.

The young man, then taking his leave, walked rapidly toward the business center of the town, and soon entered a four-story office building. He unlocked a heavy oaken door. On the glass pane in the door, after the young man had closed it behind him, Bostwick read these words in gold-gilt letters: "Asher Wells, Lawyer." After this the Chief went leisurely to his hotel, for there was no hurry; besides, he needed time in which to think out what next it were best for him to do.

It was a few minutes before eight o'clock, soon after a carriage with two happy, hopeful persons in it had wheeled away from the Giddings home, that Bostwick rang the bell. Bill Giddings himself opened the door. Even the servants had gone to the theatre, for good actors came not often to B——, and the play was one that had had a whole year's run in Broadway. This fact overshadowed all that Walter Somers had said about it, and Somers was a famous critic; he never permitted the exigencies of the counting room to influence his judgment of a play, or the fact that it was a Broadway favorite to sway him in his criticisms.

So, Giddings was the only one in the house when Bostwick rang the bell. After as little ceremony as need be, the Chief found himself in a bountifully-furnished sitting room, pleasantly engaged in conversation with the confidential friend of Sam Ives.

Bostwick noticed that Giddings was somewhat ill at ease; yet he was polite and agreeable, and the Chief could see that his was a confiding nature. He liked this manner of temperament much better than that of some other men he had met under delicate circumstances—of those, for instance, who, having cause to be ill at ease, are defiant, blustering, pompous. So he knew that Giddings would be reasonable about it, and it would not be necessary to resort to unpleasant measures. It is more than likely that Giddings even knew who Bostwick was, for the Chief, as has been said, was famous in the east, especially in Washington, and Giddings had spent several anxious days in that city very recently. Surely, Akers was not unaware of Bostwick's existence, nor of the business he was engaged in. But, of course, Akers was not just then in a position to know that Bostwick was now in B——.

If it was true that Giddings knew who Bostwick was, then he must have known what his mission was. All the more reason therefore did Bostwick have for admiring him for his politeness, his agreeableness and his confiding nature. And he pitied him on account of the plight he was in; for Bostwick, too, was the proud and devoted father of a lovely daughter. She was the idol of his heart, the solace of his declining years.

Therefore it was that he approached the subject gently, compassionately, and with a feeling that duty sometimes compels disagreeable announcements.

"You have a daughter, Mr. Giddings?"

"Yes, sir."

"She is a beautiful girl; I have seen her."

"And very dear to me," added Giddings.

"She is engaged to be married," continued Bostwick.

"That is," replied Giddings, hesitatingly, "yes; yet only since yesterday. I cannot imagine how it could so soon be known outside the family."

Among those that knew him Bostwick had a great record as a guesser of riddles, and after he had seen a hopeful young couple on the Giddings porch that very afternoon, the riddle was not difficult of solution. Then Bostwick added this to his last statement:

"To Mr. Asher Wells."

"Yes; that is correct."

"He is the local attorney for the C. Q. D. railway," continued Bostwick. This fact Bostwick could know without guessing it.

"A very fine man, Mr. Bostwick."

"Undoubtedly. You also maintain certain relations with the company."

"I have looked after its local affairs to some extent, securing right-of-way for it, and so forth."

"And legislation, under direction of Mr. Ives," suggested the Chief.

Giddings did not reply. By this time he must have concluded that he was in the presence of an expert mind reader, one with the "Scotch second sight."

"You are also acquainted with Andy Akers, of Washington," said Bostwick, after giving Giddings plenty of time in which to have replied to his previous remark.

"I have met him," replied Giddings.

"Of course you are aware of the trouble he is in?"

"I read of it in the newspapers."

"A friend of his mentioned your name to me just before I came away, Mr. Giddings." This was somewhat indefinite;

yet it proved effective. Who the friend was mattered little, even though it was Eva Farnum, who had no great admiration for Giddings to begin with.

"There are those who are not always accurate in their statements, Mr. Bostwick."

After a long pause Bostwick continued:

"Perhaps it might be well if you would accompany me to Washington. Akers is in deep distress; you should be near him. You may need to consult with each other. I leave on the midnight train."

"And Martha!" exclaimed Giddings. "She may not return from the theatre before then."

"Your daughter will be here shortly," replied Bostwick in kindly tone. "I have arranged for that with Mr. Wells, through a third person. They will leave the theatre at the end of the second act.

"Merciful heavens!" exclaimed Giddings, now on his feet, standing near Bostwick. "She knows nothing about it."

"You will have time to explain matters when she comes. I'm sorry, Mr. Giddings, yet it is unavoidable."

There could now be no question in Giddings' mind that his connection with the supposed abduction was fully known to those who had the lawful right to deal with such things, and it required only a moment or two for him to realize the situation he was in and to determine upon a plan of action. It is more than likely that, since leaving Ives in New York, he had outlined a course to pursue, if it came to this.

Even while he was turning the problem in his mind, and Bostwick was turning the pages of a magazine, waiting for Giddings to reply, if he chose to do so, the rumble of carriage wheels was heard through the open door. In another moment Martha Giddings, bounding into the room, a scared expression on her face, was at her father's side. She was about to speak,

when she saw Bostwick. Then Giddings moved slowly toward an adjoining room, motioning Martha to follow him.

"Just a moment, papa; I'll ask Asher to wait on the porch. We are anxious to see the last act."

When the door of the adjoining room was closed, Giddings and his daughter inside, she exclaimed:

"Papa, what does this mean? Who is the strange gentleman? Why were we sent for?"

Categorical replies to the questions of some women are necessary, though it is more than likely the replies will result merely in additional inquiries before one-half the first ones are answered. Not so with Martha Giddings; she had a logical mind.

"There is some very important business to be attended to, my dear child," said her father; "I must go east on No. 2. You will go with me; I shall need you. Mr. Bostwick returns on the same train. I will tell you all about it tomorrow."

"I must explain to Asher. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

Two hours later the Citrus Limited pulled out of the station at B——. Bostwick, Giddings and Martha were in the rear sleeper. Of course Asher Wells was greatly surprised; yet he was mollified in some degree by the lingering kiss he received before Martha entered the coach, and the promise that she would return to him "the very minute the nasty old business is disposed of. But for papa's poor health, Asher, I would not leave you."

En route the next day Giddings explained to her that a good for nothing scamp he happened to know had been arrested, and that he had connected the Giddings name with the Twain abduction.

"How fortunate it is, Martha," he remarked with an encouraging smile, "that my standing among men is sufficient to pre-

clude the necessity of a court process to bring me to Washington."

"A court process, father!" she exclaimed. "Surely, you have had nothing to do with—"

"Men who are in politics, Martha, are obliged to deal with all kinds of people, and sometimes one must bear the burden of others' deeds, especially their evil deeds; it is so easy for such men to put the blame where it does not belong."

"Of course it is all a horrible mistake, dear father," she replied, an interrogative note in her words.

"Yes, my child; it is a horrible mistake. But do not allow it to trouble you for a single moment."

As soon as Bostwick saw the spacious Giddings residence the evening before, and had made a mental photograph of Martha and Asher, he felt that the family name would be a sufficient bond of indemnity, and that it would not be necessary to go through the formality of an arrest.

And Asher Wells, having been assured that it was "merely an unexpected business trip," and Martha being convinced that her father's vindication would be only a matter of form, she tried to make herself comfortable by reading the latest love story, several of them, indeed, as the red-bound books were dropped into the seat of her section by the newsboy.

Yet, Martha's sad eyes could not be persuaded to follow the lines of the book she was trying to read. They preferred to gaze dreamily out of the window, until, finally, the view seemed to be obscured, as if a sheet of rain had enveloped the window pane. Still, the sun was shining brightly, and there were no clouds against the sky.

Then Bostwick came along. He made a pleasant remark and sat down opposite her. He could plainly see that the obstruction to her vision was not the fault of the window pane, for it was not raining. His heart was deeply touched.

After a few moments, in the most cheerful manner possible, he said:

"Your father is not well, Miss Giddings."

"He has been working hard of late, and is almost a nervous wreck," she replied.

"He should enter a rest cure," said the Chief. "There will be no obstacle to it."

"It is very kind of you, Mr. Bostwick."

"I know of a good one. We will drive there directly on our arrival. You may come to my home, which is near the rest cure. I have a daughter about your age. You will be welcome."

She thanked him and gave him her hand; there was the clasp of sincerity and gratitude in it. Then she looked out of the window again; it was opaque, dimmed with moisture.

The following morning plus one, when she returned from the rest cure to the Bostwick home, Martha Giddings was greatly perturbed. She looked older by a decade than when the Chief first saw her on the porch in the shade of the blue-striped awning at B—.

But how could Asher Wells' anxiety be appeased? What would he say—what would he do—if he knew? What would the gossiping world say? These were the disturbing reflections that were running riotously in her mind.

Surely, necessity is the mother of invention. For Martha Giddings the time had suddenly come when truthful invention must give way to subterfuge. Her father had told her in substance, as he lay upon his little narrow bed—for he was now in a state of prostration—of the instructions he had received from Ives, that Ives had received from Fox and Fox from Roberts, though he mentioned no names. Martha understood intuitively, and assured him that she would share his misfortunes, come what might, or weal or woe. She was as brave as she was de-

voted, and, as Fox told Roberts on a certain occasion, she loved her father "above all other men."

She wrote a long letter to Asher, telling him of her father's serious illness, and what the doctors had said must be done if his life was to be saved; indeed, it would be necessary to take him to a famous resort in Mexico. She showed the letter, or the salient part of it, to Chief Bostwick, and he gave the subterfuge his approval.

Martha Giddings had as little doubt about Asher Wells' love for her and of his constancy as she had about her father's innocence, and of this she entertained no doubt whatever. Did Asher prove worthy of such a love? We shall see.

CHAPTER XX

"LOVE IS EVERYWHERE"

Don José and Senora Guerrero, as became their official and social station, were among the first to board the "Penelope." They came to welcome Mrs. Holt and her guests to San Enrique, for it was the first time, perhaps, that so distinguished a company, sailing in the yacht of a millionaire of many multiples, had come to these shores. This function deserves a place in our story. The ceremonious call occurred after a small sailboat, carrying the Alcalde, his wife the Senora, Juanita and Susie, had been made fast at the "Penelope's" starboard side.

The old Don, in bespangled, tight-fitting waistcoat and gold-braided trousers, very wide at the bottom, and a gorgeous sombrero; the Senora in a quaint cut of silk gown suggesting medieval fashion plates, and the softest red and black shawl imaginable, an heirloom no doubt, gracefully draped about her shoulders; the Senorita Juanita in modern garb, very up-to-date, and Susie in a new pale blue frock—this was the interesting picture as they came up the polished stairway leading to the upper deck of the millionaire's yacht.

The ceremony, the courtly courtesy and politeness attending this memorable call of state quite captured Mrs. Holt, and it certainly impressed all of the visitors. Juanita, especially, showed to advantage. Her culture and beauty surprised them all, for Mrs. Holt had so bewailed the benighted condition of

the Mexicans that the other members of the party had come to feel they were arrived at Nomansland.

The "tea" at the stone house on the hill that evening, behind the screened porticos, was "so different," Mrs. Holt observed, "from the coarse dinners at the Capital. These plain people," she remarked to Mrs. Grey, "appear to be very happy amongst their simple surroundings, no display, no ostentation."

"The quiet, simple life, my dear," replied Mrs. Grey. "It is much to be preferred."

"To be sure," affirmed Mrs. Holt. "No millions to vex one, nor balloons to carry one's loved ones away. No great castles filled with bickering, disagreeable servants, and so many other responsibilities to fasten themselves upon one's nerves. After all, Mexico may be quite endurable when one becomes accustomed to it. Yet, there is such a lack of things hereabouts!"

"Mother is a darling anyway," said Margaret to Enid. "She readily adjusts herself to everything; and I am so pleased to see the deep interest she takes in the Senora and her fascinating daughter. Mr. Bolston seems quite captivated by the fair Juanita's charms. What a remarkable man—so devoted to Senator Twain."

"One in ten thousand, Margery," added Enid; "a nobleman without a title."

Yet, alas! how uncertain are the plans of man. In what strange directions is his course unexpectedly laid.

During the past two days the worthy young Englishman, with the purpose of consuming time against the arrival of the "Penelope," and in the hope that some further investigations might lead to additional developments, had been riding the country far into the hills among the scattered haciendas, accompanied by Pierre Sanchez, whose accounts he was as yet in no haste to credit. Returning after nightfall to the village, and learning of the arrival of Mrs. Holt and her guests, he

hastened to the Alcalde's home to greet them. It was his first visit at the stone house on the hill.

Susie was overjoyed. She was moved to many rapturous exclamations when the Englishman came upon the broad veranda, and made an effort to put her slender arms around his neck; but he was so tall and unbending her attempt to do so was not a complete success.

And how very pretty Susie looked in her dainty new frock! Surely, there were tender and loving hearts and hands in this household.

"Oh, I am so glad you came, Mr. Bolston; they wanted to see you close by. We could look at you through the glass—you know, that you put to your eyes—and saw you before you went to the mountains."

"You saw me through the telescope. Is that it?" he asked.

"Yes! That's its name. We saw you many times that way in the village."

"And who are 'we'?" he asked.

"Why, don't you know?" exclaimed Susie, with some surprise.

"Well, you saw me for one, you say."

"And she saw you too, more than I did—Juanita did, with the long glass. Oh, but she is nice, and so beautiful. Come and see her, Mr. Bolston. You will just love her! I do."

If Don José had not appeared at this moment to lead the way to the large sitting room, where the guests were assembled, Bolston would have been presented to Juanita by Susie with the least amount of ceremony; for already she had him by the hand, and was pulling him through the doorway. The greetings that followed were most cordial, as was to have been expected.

"How brown and fine you look," exclaimed Mrs. Holt.

He was welcomed, too, by the gracious and comely wife of

the Alcalde—a woman of refinement, and, much to his surprise, as white as he. Evidently she was of the pure Castilian blood, and reminded him of the fair grande dames he had seen in Madrid. She could speak English sufficiently to make the services of an interpreter unnecessary.

The old Don busied himself for a time smoothing Susie's pretty blond hair, while Bolston, the Senora and the new arrivals were engaged in conversation. Then he went to the foot of the narrow stairway and called to "Juanita," who, it may be supposed, was delayed, on this particular occasion, by the niceties of her toilet.

"My daughtair," explained the Senora to the Englishman, with an expression of pride. "Soon she come, and speak de *idioma* well of your country, as yourself do."

No man is so completely steeled against feminine charm as to successfully resist a thrill of pardonable pleasure when he comes in sudden contact with a marvelously beautiful woman. In the ordinary walks of life, where men and woman meet in daily social intercourse, the mind is apt to become inured to passing impressions, the eye satiated with recurring attractions, however remarkable they may seem to be.

Nature has its own language, and a tender, fluent speech it is, that needs no interpreter; and although the human emotions may be subdued indefinitely—compelled to dormancy by the mind—there is nothing that will stir one's soul like the joyous chatter of a pretty little girl. Susie's exuberant demonstrations and the touch of her soft small hands had brought Bolston back to a realization that he still belonged to civilization—where fair women are, and where love predominates in triumph over all the elements, particularly those of the poetic kind.

He was impressed with the pleasing presence of the Alcalde's wife, but was not prepared nor even constituted to disguise his astonishment, to say nothing of the strange agitation of his

heart, when he beheld the fascinating and almost supernaturally beautiful girl that came forward, on the arm of her tawny father, to take his hand and bid him welcome.

Nor did the music of her voice nor the swish of her silken skirts cease to confuse him when the proud and courtly Alcalde interposed to express his great admiration for the visitor, and, through Juanita, to declare that "the brave, distinguished Englishman, in common with the others, did them honor far beyond their deserts in coming to the Guerrero home." Praises and compliments were vain soundings in his ear, with this picture of surpassing loveliness before his very eyes.

It must have been about this time that the observant Margaret noted his manner toward Juanita, calling Enid's attention thereto. Yet, while he struggled to compose himself, far be it from such a gentleman as he to overlook his earlier friends and associates, to whom he related briefly his experiences and discoveries. But of these, of course, they could speak more at length on the morrow.

Heretofore, when in the presence of an attractive woman, this rare Briton had succeeded in concealing all feelings of an ardent kind. It had been an easy matter for him to preserve an attitude of polite unconcern, and to assume the monkish air peculiar to persons endowed, as he was, with great self-control.

He had always nursed the fear that some day he might betray himself to the wrong woman. But, notwithstanding his habitual reserve, it must not be assumed that his was an adamantine nature. It was well, he had learned, that in the presence of Enid Grey, for instance, he had been able to shield his latent susceptibilities, for few women were more fascinating than she. He had not forgotten their first meeting, when she shone with a radiance and beauty that would have stirred any man not trained in extreme caution against feminine charm.

But now, without the least forewarning, under most incongruous circumstances, he found himself feasting his eyes upon a womanly vision whose dazzling and appealing beauty made his astonished senses reel. For the first time in his eventful life he was intoxicated, almost drunk with admiration of one of the opposite sex. The monastic mien that heretofore had never deserted him was gone. All his former resolutions not to betray himself "to the wrong woman" had vanished. In this helpless situation his words came falteringly in broken sentences. He could not avoid the feeling that his perturbation was observed; and yet, strangely enough, he did not seem to care; for by this time, notwithstanding his own confusion, he could plainly see that the charming Juanita, like himself, was ineffectually struggling against newly aroused emotion. There was a mutuality of feeling between them that Bolston, for his own part, was not disposed to suppress, and this fact but added to his bewilderment.

"Ah! how very fortunate that you came to Mexico to find poor Mr. Twain," she exclaimed, when they found themselves seated together, undesignedly, quite apart from the rest of the company, the visitors being much taken up with the Senora and her quaint expressions. "How very beautiful she is" (referring to Enid). "You have known her long? And her charming friend, Miss Holt—an exquisite type of the blond, is she not?"

"I believe so," he replied, rather guardedly. "I have never been able to distinguish between the different types, there are so many shades, and my judgment, I fear—"

"Cannot be deficient in the least," she interrupted, with a merry laugh. "I am sure you must have seen many beautiful women."

Here he interrupted her with a confession which must have been more surprising to him than it was to her.

"And if I were to tell you that not in all my travels have I ever seen one that compares with the daughter of Don José Guerrero, would you believe me?"

"How very kind you are, Mr. Bolston, and how ungracious it would be in me if I did not believe you," she replied, a wondrous light coming into her eyes; "but of course you do not tell me so. How can I answer?"

But even the compliment he had bestowed upon her did not sway Juanita from the train of her inquiries, and she reverted again to the striking qualities of Enid and Margaret. Her insistence puzzled him. Why should she be so very deeply interested in his appraisal of woman's charms?

Could this adorable woman with the wholesome olive complexion and raven-black hair; with eyes, mouth and voice so perfectly in accord with all his previous conceptions of entrancing beauty; this lissom enchantress with the rich, fierce blood of the Aztecs and the Castillians flowing in her veins; with an ancestry distinguished in the earlier government of the Republic, a grandfather having fought his way to the presidency, and, on the maternal side, coming from a race that had repelled the Moorish yoke in Spain—could this captivating girl, who had awakened his dormant feelings, be reading his thoughts? Could it be that she was the one predestined for him? And was she, even now, contending with the demon that would brook no rivalry for his affections? These were the reflections that were now passing hurriedly through his mind, as he struggled for a reply to her pressing inquiry.

So, again he began, with some hesitation, to say that Miss Grey was famous for her many accomplishments, and that she was engaged to be married to Senator Twain. But Juanita must have known all this before.

"I trust that my request does not embarrass you, Mr. Bol-

ston," said she, laughingly. "If so I release you. It was only a whim of mine."

King Solomon has failed to tell us of the ways of a maid with a man. Yet, the period in which he sang was considerably in advance of this Mexican maiden's time; else surely his muse had not omitted a few melodious strains by which to interpret the subtleties of Juanita Guerrero's questionings.

The following day was spent by the gentlemen of the party going over the events since the "Penelope" sailed for the Caribbean sea and the searchers set out from the Capital. The arrest of Akers and the apprehension of Giddings bore no small part in the conference, for these momentous events had been recounted in cipher messages from Bostwick to Bolston. So, it was agreed that the "Penelope" should remain at San Enrique and the Englishman should go to Washington for a short conference with Bostwick, Arthur Grey dwelling plenteously upon its importance, for he continued to maintain that there were those more culpable than the two men now in custody, and he still cherished a desire to "run" that peppery editorial. Next morning Bolston was carried to Tampico by the "Penelope," all the interesting personages mentioned in this chapter accompanying him.

"Steamer day" was one of the uncertainties of this thriving Mexican city, and when it was found that the sailing of the next steamship for the northern Republic was three days off, Mrs. Holt and her guests could do no better than spend the time in sightseeing. From one view point this must have been a vexatious disappointment to the Englishman, who was anxious to be about the business for which he had set out. From an entirely different point of view, he was content to wait. Besides, he would now have an opportunity to inquire into the commercial conditions of this ambitious little city of thirty thousand souls, where so many British ships came to load with

cotton, asphalt, lead, ixtle fiber, bananas, citrus fruits, and other products of Mexico. If only Juanita would consent to assist him as interpreter. Had he any doubt she would gladly do so? In any event, the three days would be turned to both pleasure and profit.

Before steamer day came around the party visited all the places of interest in and about Tampico, including historical points on the Panuco river, a stream somewhat famous under the Huaxtec Kingdom until Nuno de Guzman came to lay the country waste for the glory of Spain, three centuries before General Guerrero, Juanita's great ancestor, proclaimed the Republic at Vera Cruz and became its President.

Juanita found much pleasure in recounting the historical incidents, Bolston listening with rapt attention. Visiting the great steel pier the day before he sailed for the north, they became so absorbed in each other, as they sat in a secluded spot looking out upon the placid water, that the others lost sight of them, and, after a vain effort to discover their whereabouts, amidst the confusion of merchandise piled promiscuously about the pier, gave up the search and returned to the "Penelope."

"They will find themselves," said Mrs. Holt, resignedly.

It was here that Bolston confessed something more than admiration for this lovely descendant of one of Mexico's bravest and most distinguished rulers. In her woman's way, since coming to Tampico, she had succeeded, entirely through suggestion, in conveying to his mind the fact that she was of gentle blood, thus supplementing the overpowering beauty and grace that already had carried the wary Briton into captivity.

After ever so long a time, short enough to them, no doubt, spent in "finding themselves," during which Bolston left the impress of his warm lips upon her sweet hand, thoughtfully and silently they walked along the pier to the noisy street, his arm locked close in hers. It was so perfectly natural that

Bolston and Juanita, he in pursuit of commercial information for his government and she as his interpreter, should have wandered in a different course from the others, in the maze of coffee bags and cotton bales, that the incident required but slight explanation when they reached the "Penelope."

Thus it happened, when the Englishman sailed away next day for the north, that the millionaire's yacht followed in the wake of the big steamer until the two vessels came almost opposite San Enrique; and that a Mexican maid of high degree and glowing temperament, when she reached the stone house among the palms and found herself within the seclusion of her own dainty apartment, threw herself upon the couch and wept with ecstatic joy, exclaiming, "He loves me! He loves me!"

On the voyage to the north Bolston's mind found diversion from the serious duties of a rescuer—even from persistent thoughts of how the outrage against his friend was to be avenged. And, too, he had been aroused from his dream of a redeemable Republic, a subject which Arthur Grey and he had often discussed. He was thinking, dreaming of Juanita.

He spent the hours, many of them, looking, with something like a new kind of understanding, it may be imagined, into the blue waters of the sea. We need not pause to recount all the strange things that he saw in their silent depths. Thus he mused: Twain would eventually return to occupy his place in the Senate again (consolation came easily to him now); another vote on the second amendment to the Purchase bill would be taken; the Vice President would announce that the amendment had been defeated; the incentive of the Monger's Guild toward universal dominion would be checked. Was not all this very fine? Bolston was a hopeful person, withal.

Oh, yes; delightful thought! Susie had been restored to her father. Had not he done his part here also? What next?

What, indeed, was in store for himself? Then, with his eyes closed, mayhap he could see glimpses of Elysium, something entirely new to him. Ah! He was loved! He knew it; Cupid, the universal interpreter, while loitering even at San Enrique, had told him so.

Perhaps it was this that accounted for his brief stay at the Capital; for something seemed continually to be whispering in his ears, "Back to Mexico!" Nothing like this had ever befallen him before.

On his return to San Enrique, having reported on the cruiser and paid his respects to those of the "Penelope," he visited the stone house on the hill. And so, seated on the veranda in a wicker chair, Juanita half reclining, gracefully, in a hammock ever so near—but why give all the particulars? And yet, how perfectly natural it was in this cozy stage setting that there should have been a convenient guitar, almost, but not quite, within reaching distance of the charmer in the hammock; and that Bolston, being nearest the fatal instrument, should have voluntarily handed it to her. Thus do some men assist Fate in contributing to their own doom! And whoever knew a Mexican doncellita, especially one of the better class, one so richly endowed by nature as was Juanita Guerrero, that was not familiar with the delicate art of stirring the innermost passions of man with her soft, humanizing song?

Did he prostrate himself before this tempting and perfect picture of loveliness when she had finished her incantation and give vent to the surging emotions of his soul by again declaring his love for her? He did not; still, it would have been so very easy for him to have done so, had he yielded to his riotous inclinations.

Yet, while she sang, thrumming the responsive strings with her soft, fair hand, marking each tender expression with a look that would have compelled the surrender of a less resolute man,

Bolston found time to think. Somehow, his splendid self-control had arrived at the point of reassertion. He began now to realize his situation; at least he so persuaded himself. This was but a passing incident in his career, nothing more—one, though, that was never to be blotted from his memory. He knew himself well enough to feel, deep down in his honest heart, that if he should give way to what he now tried to believe was but a momentary infatuation, he must and would abide its results, good or bad, throughout his life. Was it selfishness that prompted him? He preferred to think, on the contrary, it was the wisdom of discretion.

But what were the thoughts of Juanita Guerrero—this embodiment of all that was surpassingly sweet and beautiful? Did she partake of his stoic English precaution? Could she abide his deliberate conclusions? Was it in her zealous nature to curb the welling emotions of her heart and try to forget?—to efface the memory of this tender experience from her mind? Would the stalwart Englishman's impetuous speech, when he told her she was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, when, again, he had kissed her hand at Tampico, ever cease to thrill her confiding soul?

Impossible! It was her Latin lot to love—or to hate! Something of the nature of these reflections must have challenged her thoughts, for at the conclusion of her voluptuous song she turned her inquiring eyes full upon him and asked:

"Mr. Bolston, do you believe that we women are savages—barbarians, indeed, according to the edict of a Chicago professor?"

"I do not," he replied, emphatically. "What savage could sing so sweetly?"

"Or love as civilized women love?" she added, interrogatively.

“As romantic history tells us they are capable of loving,” he replied, guardedly.

“And capable of avenging, too,” she added with a laugh. “Perhaps the professor had in mind the tigresslike fury of a woman scorned—one whose love has been spurned—and the ignoble, the barbaric, the savage character of her renunciation.”

“Surely you do not mean to say that in this regard she is more savage than man?” he exclaimed.

“The man who destroys because of love acts upon the impulse of the moment,” she replied. “He is insane with jealousy, and seldom fails to regret his act before his victim ceases to breathe. But the woman whose love drives her to the desperation of so rash an act approaches the consummation of it through pre-meditation. She weighs the consequences in advance and is prepared to meet and to defy the punishment; and how frequently it has happened that she prefers methods of retaliation that are unspeakably cruel—savage indeed. Is it not so?”

He was amazed that she should draw the distinction so clearly, so accurately, this young and innocent girl, and almost shuddered at her remarkable power of discernment. To reassure her of his disbelief in regard to the professor’s theory, he reminded her of the shockingly cruel fate of Hypatia, the Neo-Platonic philosopher, at the hands of men.

“Could there have been anything more savage or barbarous?” he asked.

“Yet they did not murder and mutilate for love’s sake,” she answered. “Theirs was the madness of fanaticism. The furious passion of woman finds its best exemplification in the tragedy of Medea. Following the news columns of the daily papers one is impressed with the feeling that there have been many real tragedies of which this one is the true prototype. Oh, but this is such a gloomy subject,” she exclaimed, changing her expression, “Pardon me for suggesting it, Mr. Bolston.

Tell me of your home in England, and are you to return soon?—to come again, of course, for you will be at the wedding of Mr. Twain and Miss Grey."

"I hope to be," he replied.

"The affair assumes a delightful background; it is so perfectly romantic," she exclaimed, "if only he returns to her. It is worthy of dramatization. Perhaps, Mr. Bolston, you will write it into a play."

"And if I should, you would be immortalized," he answered, laughingly. "You would play the leading role."

"What, I!—in the play? You are surely joking. I have done nothing to be so honored. Of course you would be in the play also?" said she, the question accompanied by an inscrutable look. He had not thought of himself in this connection. "And what part would I take?" she went on. "Oh, horrible! I would not want to be the Medea, and kill some one to avenge myself upon a wicked husband."

"Nor I the unfaithful Jason!" laughed Bolston.

"To take another wife," she added. "Certainly not. You must write it differently."

"Shall I write it so that we are very deeply in love with each other?" he inquired, peering into her eyes. Surely love was speaking! This was not the sedate Bolston.

"Splendid! Oh, yes; that will be very fine," she exclaimed, "and I will be most unhappy—in the play, I mean."

"Only in the play," he replied.

And all along, from the moment of their first meeting, these two remarkable persons, without knowing it, had been rehearsing for their parts in the greatest drama of their lives.

When he was taking his leave, Juanita, with a suspicion of sadness in her voice, requested that he come again soon.

"Before I write the play?" he inquired.

"Oh, yes! It will take so long to write the play," she re-

plied, “and we must talk about it ever so much, you know, before it is finished.”

“And without your help I am sure it would not be a success. “We will collaborate,” said he laughingly. “At any rate, I promise you I will do myself the honor to call at the Guerrero home, where I have received such generous hospitality, and had the good fortune to meet your charming self.”

“Oh, it is nothing at all, our hospitality,” she replied, “if you do not entirely forget—”

She paused in the middle of the sentence. There was a plaintiveness in her expression that lingered with Ralph Bolston, ringing in his ears through all the days that were to come before this new problem was solved. It was like a piteous cry for help—“if you do not entirely forget.”

But he did not forget; nor did he try. Soon he found himself in a most unsettled frame of mind. Heretofore, with but little effort, he had been able to map out a course of action and to follow it with a purpose. Now, he seemed to be aimlessly drifting. The absence of encumbrances—he had no near relatives, and there was no one to lean upon him—had enabled him to lead a life of comparative independence and ease. Yet, there was something lacking in his later life. He never realized it so much as now. Why, he urged upon himself, should a man defy the laws of nature and insist upon the ways of a recluse? Why should he try to conquer destiny, and “chafe against a yoke that others have long since borne?”

The dwellers in Olympos,
The gods themselves, who terrify with threats
The sins of men, have burned with lawless fires.

Was it wise, was it just, that he should continue to war against the passion to which he owed his own existence?

Thus, self-accused and in some degree self-convicted, he was humbled, and could but feel that his offending, if it were to

be condoned, demanded a full confession at the only shrine where a plea for mercy might be entered with any hope of its being answered. Would Juanita Guerrero forgive him, he asked himself, for his failure to respond to her sweet advances?

And here he was beset by another tribulation. What would the world say, if the world should be allowed to know? Ah, no; he would not disparage her. The merest suggestion of it excited self resentment. He had never placed an exalted estimate upon his own importance; nor would he now superimpose the fact that he was entitled by birth and station to be ranked as an English gentleman as a qualifying barrier against the hand of any lady of refinement and respectability upon whom he might choose to bestow his affections. Juanita Guerrero was all that could be desired in this regard. After all, the vital question was—did she really love him? He would wait and see what the Fates decreed.

As for himself—but man is always sure of himself! His love, like the rest of his rugged nature, is so strong and practical that it may be suppressed to nothingness, if need be, while woman's love may be unloosed to all destructiveness. Man must be the judge, the calculating disburser of his passion; woman the patient recipient. Is it, then, to be wondered at that she sometimes doubts her own compelling powers, and, in her desperation, shatters the urn in which all her hope is treasured?

Still, Bolston persisted silently, and it may be over-cautiously, to nurse his malady, without so much as even a diagnosis by Doctor Richardson. Ah! there was but one cure for his disease; already the philter had been administered, but he was not yet fully aware of it, nor would he have admitted it even to himself.

CHAPTER XXI

WOMAN'S APPEAL TO WOMAN

Enid Grey was so much improved by the sea voyage and change of scene that Mrs. Holt had now begun to felicitate herself upon it as being due entirely to her own timely intervention against the ravages which, as she said to Margaret, would have "made mourners of all of us, to be sure." And she lost no opportunity to deride Doctor Richardson and the whole of his profession for the inefficacy of their cures; whereupon the Doctor smilingly told her of the insistence of an aunt of his who always prescribed ginger, taken internally, for the tooth-ache. This reminded the good lady that it was a lack of "ginger" that brought Enid to her former plight.

"Besides," said she, "codliver oil will not relieve one of the heartache; no more will squills cure maudlin sentiment, as I have so often said to Andrew about illnesses in our family. To be sure, no such distemper as Enid's has ever come to any of mine, but why grieve one's heart out because of a man, who persists in evading his friends and neglecting his duties, roaming from place to place around the world with no purpose that can be imagined unless it be to vex those who would help him?"

Having delivered herself of this practical exhortation, Mrs. Holt bethought her of an invitation to tea at the Senora's, whence the Englishman, quitting the cruiser early that afternoon, was already allured.

"You and your daughter," remarked Mrs. Holt to the Senora, when the party was hastily leaving the Guerrero home after the tea—for the weather was threatening—"must come with me for a sail to Havana. Oh, I'll fetch you home again," she exclaimed, when the Senora shrugged her plump shoulders. "It will be a change for you, and a great pleasure to me."

"It is of you too kind. *Gracias*, madame. Juanita, hear you what the madame to us say?"

"*Si, madre mio.* It will be delightful," replied Juanita. Yet, there was something in the girl's look that put her mother on her guard, and thanking Mrs. Holt again she requested Juanita to say the matter would be submitted for the decision of the Alcalde.

"Surely the Alcalde will not object," exclaimed Mrs. Holt.

She was not a woman to be thwarted in any enterprise she might undertake, be there ever so little rhyme or reason in it. Her great kindness of heart included a liberal admixture of spirit and adroitness. This fact had impressed itself upon the Englishman, who was quick to see that unless he resorted to stratagem the time might come when the millionaire's wife instead of the Doctor, Noggins and himself, would be in command of the Twain expedition. He had no desire to interfere with her prerogative as the commodore of the "*Penelope*"; but, for some reason he himself could not fathom just then, he felt it to be his duty to prevent the extension of her jurisdiction to the Guerrero household. With this end in view he found an opportunity to say privately to Juanita, among other things, that there were few attractions in Havana.

"I do not care to go so far away," she replied, with a sweet smile. "It will be much pleasanter here, I am sure."

Now, when Martha Giddings came to Tampico on the steamer, leaving her father in the rest cure at the Capital, she found herself facing a most distressing ordeal. There was no

one here that she knew to whom she could turn for advice—none like the sympathetic Bostwick. She must pursue her purpose alone, among strangers. But with a heart full of love and a resolute pride—the pride of self-esteem, such as belongs to noble souls—she had nerved herself to the delicate task before her.

At San Enrique the following evening, when she passed from the creaking gangway of the coastwise vessel by the light of a sputtering flambeau that was dangerously near extinction in the downpour of rain, to find herself standing upon a rickety pier among a few half-clad natives who were there to assist with the freight, it is more than probable that her heart sank to the uttermost depths of despair.

It is doubtful if Asher Wells, even had he been there to guide her footsteps toward the village, now wrapped in darkness, with here and there a dim ray of light to indicate its existence, could have dispelled the gloom of her surroundings. Where now was Eph Fox with his protestations of undying affection and his vaunted promises of assistance if misfortune should ever befall her? Yet, Fox was the last man that she would have wished to see.

As she walked slowly and almost aimlessly along the slippery boards of the decaying wharf, she came upon two men who were hastening toward a launch that had been made fast above the pier-end. They were conversing in English. One of them carried a ship's lantern. The other held an umbrella over their heads. As they were about to step into the launch she spoke to them.

"Pardon me, please. Can you direct me to a place of shelter?"

It was a voice that would have invited attention anywhere, it was so sadly sweet, with an unusual touch of feeling in it. It did not have the joyous ring that caught Chief Bostwick's

perceptive ear when he heard it on the veranda behind the blue-striped awning at B——; yet, even now, it seemed something more than a woman's voice. Its plaintive melody touched Arthur Grey's heart, for it was he that carried the umbrella in the effort to shield the "Penelope's" captain and himself from the tropic rain.

"You are sadly in need of shelter, my good girl. I know of none more inviting than that we are now seeking. You may come with us if you will, and welcome."

Martha did not hesitate. She was soon in the launch and in due time the three were on board the "Penelope." Here she was made comfortable by Mrs. Holt and Margaret. They did not question her. It was enough to know that she was in need of friends and that she had the appearance of respectability. Surely, she was grateful. Her refined expressions and her sad eyes put this fact beyond cavil.

"Such a night for one to be out!" exclaimed the good Mrs. Holt. "And only one house in the miserable place that's fit to live in, and even that is where no stranger could find it in the dark. They are good people, though."

The leave-taking had but just been concluded at the Guerberos when the rain came in torrents. It was then that the little steamer arrived from Tampico, and Martha Giddings, the only passenger for San Enrique, found herself on the wet, rickety pier. Mr. Grey was the last to quit the Guerrero home after the tea; the launch could not carry them all at one time, so the "Penelope's" captain returned for him, bringing an umbrella. It was under these circumstances that Martha found sympathetic friends and comfortable shelter that night.

Had Enid Grey been requested to lead a revolution in Mexico she would not have experienced greater astonishment than when, the next morning, Martha Giddings asked her to intercede in behalf of one of the chief villains that the whole of

civilization now believed were responsible for Cornelius Twain's strange absence and her own indescribable misery.

"I come to you," pleaded Martha, "because you are a woman, and have a woman's heart. I know now how you have suffered—you who are more innocent, if that were possible, than Mr. Twain. I saw you at the great auditorium at M——. I, too, am the victim of peculiar and distressing circumstances, and I felt that I could appeal to you, because you would understand. In Heaven's name do not turn me away! Allow me to serve you in any capacity. I speak French, fluently my teacher says. May I not remain with you for a while, ostensibly as an instructor? Only let me stay until you have read my breaking heart, and know what it all means to me and to Asher—"

She could say no more, her voice drowned in sobs. By this time Enid herself was weeping with her. Putting her arm about Martha's shoulders, and stroking her hair, she endeavored to soothe her, promising that she would do all in her power to avert the impending blow. When the distressed girl recovered herself and her tears were gone, she was looking through the open window of the little cabin into the great distance that separated her from Asher Wells. Who better than Enid Grey could read her thoughts or know the depths of her pain?

Eph Fox was right; verily Roberts was a genius in advising troubled consolidators. Yet, Fox could not fathom Roberts' mind when he asked him if he was in love with Martha Giddings and he had reluctantly confessed it; nor had he appeared to comprehend Roberts' meaning when he referred to Enid Grey's Quaker lineage.

"Dear soul!" exclaimed Enid, "you are welcome to remain—as my French instructor if you choose. I can see no harm in it. But how can I help you in the other matter? I do not control the law."

"Oh, but father was not—that is, he is in a sanitarium, and will not be required to answer to the law—unless Mr. Bolston or others interested insist upon some proceedings that—merciful Heavens! how could I face such an ordeal?"

"Enid, my dear child," replied her father when his daughter had disclosed the purpose of Martha's strange mission, "in recent months I have grown more and more compassionate for those who are in trouble. It would be impossible for me to refuse your request to help this poor suffering girl. Yet how can it be accomplished? I will talk with Bolston about it. He may be able to find a way out of the difficulty. She is confident, of course, that her wicked father is not implicated. It is but natural that she should feel as she does. Yet, Bostwick must have known what he was doing. It is fortunate that Giddings was not arrested—fortunate for her—and that the good-hearted old Chief hit upon the scheme to place him where he is. I dare say he is safe enough there, under the circumstances."

It was now necessary for Enid to take Margaret into her confidence. Her mother and Mrs. Holt must also be apprised of the situation. She said to Margaret that there might be no end to disclosures in regard to the abduction should Giddings' part in it become known.

"And no limit to the number of persons involved," Margaret added. "I am sure that father has often contributed money for political purposes. This abduction is a miserable piece of politics, and someone is paying the expenses."

"More than one, Margery. Father says there is a perfect organization among those interested in defeating the Purchase bill."

The probability of Martha Giddings' secret becoming known was now quite remote, for there was no telling who might be involved, or how "high up" it would be necessary to go if the judicial machinery were once put in motion.

At first Bolston seemed dumfounded when Gray explained matters to him. Yet he was soon sympathizing with Miss Giddings in her great misfortune. This led him to acquiesce, tentatively, in her plan to save herself from humiliation and disgrace, and, perhaps, from the loss of Asher Wells' respect, if not his love. He did not know Asher Wells; therefore he could not judge as to the extent to which he would exert himself, nor what sacrifice he would be willing to make to save Martha; whether, when the storm came, should this happen, he would not permit her to suffer alone by breaking off their engagement.

"It is a strange world," said he, "filled with a great variety of human beings, selfish for the most part, and many of them cold-blooded to the point of cruelty. We have no means of classifying Mr. Wells. Again," he continued, "if we succeed in securing a confession from Giddings, we would be obliged to use it against him. The promise of immunity to Giddings, or setting him free as the bounty of any admissions he might make, would not help his daughter. If Andy Akers is brought into court, Giddings' reputation will certainly be assailed, and the girl, whom we would be glad to save from disgrace, must thereby be exposed to contumely. Verily, my friend, it looks as if we had been erecting a house of cards."

"I realize the predicament we are in," replied Grey. "Shall the law be vindicated at the cost of this girl's hope and happiness to avenge a wrong for which she was in no way responsible?"

"That is it in a small nutshell," replied Bolston.

"It is such things as these that try one's heart to the breaking point," continued Grey. "I would have done what Bostwick did in this case—only I am afraid I would have turned Giddings loose, with the appeal of this girl pounding at my ear drums."

"Giddings is more securely in our power," suggested Bolton, "than if he were under lock and key."

"If it were he alone," replied Grey, "we might view the situation with complacency. This is but one example among ten thousand of the direful consequences of consolidation's ironshod rule. It is the innocent that are made to suffer when the crisis comes."

Yet, Martha Giddings was not to know even of the tentative conclusions they had reached; nor was it the part of wisdom to allow her to return to Washington. She must remain, for the present, as she was now become an important factor in the unraveling of the mystery; and those who instigated the abduction are destined to undergo a trial that will test their nerve capacity—a trial not provided for in the laws against high crimes and misdemeanors. Roberts' genius will surely be taxed beyond all precedent. Nemesis is still abroad, and the sword of Damocles gleams menacingly above the heads of the affrighted offenders.

CHAPTER XXII

THE HAIR TRUNK

Ah! My Philosopher friend is on the stairway; I know his footsteps. Until now he has not come to see me within a fortnight. I was about to tell you further of Mrs. Holt's kindness toward Martha Giddings, but I always lay aside my pen out of consideration for any visitor who succeeds in persuading the front hall factotum that he or she will be welcome in my smoky den, and the Philosopher, who is now at my door, has never failed to do so. I am now to be regaled with some rare theme set out in phrases replete with sublimated wisdom.

But my friend does not seem to be in a reminiscent mood this morning. He appears to be nervous, as if deeply troubled, and, having returned my greeting rather unceremoniously, he has taken up a little volume of Ruskin and is soon lost in the mythology of the Greeks—the Homeric vision of Athene the Restrainer, who helped Bellerophon to put a bridle on Pegasus, and otherwise to harness the Harpies. It is a fascinating exposition of the gods of old; and the Philosopher is so absorbed in it he may not stir nor speak for hours and hours.

I was about to take up my pen when, just then, he dropped the volume on his lap and, turning to me, broke the silence with a guffaw of laughter.

“You amuse me exceedingly,” said he.

I did not reply, but waited for him to explain the reason for his exhilaration.

"Now, I dare say," he went on, "that by this time you've convinced yourself of the great importance of the message which you hope soon to deliver to the multitude, who, if they read it at all, will refuse to profit by the moral it contains. But I, sir, have done something just now that will make two deserving and appreciative creatures very happy. I have torn up my last will and testament, by which my fortune was to have been distributed after the nature of public endowments, and, instead of bestowing it to the indirect benefit of the masses, after my demise, I have given a great share of it in cash to a worthy young relative who, I find, has been devoting herself assiduously, almost religiously, to the care of her invalid mother, having foregone an advantageous offer of marriage in order to indulge this filial duty."

"You are an altruist as well as a philosopher," I remarked.

"It is kind of you to say so, sir," he replied. "In the course of life's voyage we form peculiar notions about many things which at first appear to have been settled beyond intervention. And all suddenly we awake to a realization that conventionality, as a matter of fact, is very much awry. It is then that we begin to doubt, and to wonder if, after all, the scheme of social usage which the sages, centuries ago, designed for our guidance and control was laid as it should have been; whether we have not, all along, proceeded contrary to the laws of a higher power. Well, sir, our scheme of endowment is a mistake. The real philanthropist is he who, finding worthy subjects—and there are many of them—goes forth to relieve the living individual directly. But I ought not to be boasting of my own beneficence. Good morning, sir." And my friend hastened away.

After he was gone I fell to thinking of the far stretch that lies between philosophy and the matters with which I am dealing, and yet how easily I had managed to divert the thoughts of this follower of Socrates from those lofty currents where Athene

is wont to soar to the lower altitudes where the Harpies play their mischievous pranks.

So, now, I am encouraged to believe that in due time I may be able to fetch him away from the latter, and fasten his great mind even upon the worldly wickedness of such as Akers, Roberts & Co.

But, to my task again. It must be that Mrs. Holt had been moved by altruistic impulse, as was my Philosopher friend, and, having made some convincing discoveries in this direction, she, too, had been impressed with the thought that there are many flaws in our accepted system of beneficence.

By no possible way that she was able to make out could even the income on her husband's enormous fortune be disposed of as rapidly as it accumulated. So that, when Martha Giddings, whom she had never heard of until that distressed creature came to San Enrique and was put aboard the "Penelope" by Grey as a shelter from the storm, came unexpectedly to the good woman's notice, her kindly feelings quite overcame her, and at the first opportunity she asked the young lady if she was in financial distress, intending, of course, to offer abundant relief. Receiving a negative reply, Mrs. Holt inquired further how she might assist her. It was at this moment that Enid Grey took the multi-millionaire's wife into her further confidence, apprising her of Martha's deplorable situation. Thenceforward, Mrs. Holt held forth unremittingly in advocacy of Martha Giddings' cause.

"What boots it," said she to Margaret, "if the poor girl's dissolute parent did connive at Twain's abduction, if he really was abducted? Are the sins of the father to be visited upon his innocent child? It is too absurd to be thought of for a single instant, to be sure, and cannot be tolerated."

She said as much, with greater emphasis, to Grey and Bolston that very day. No doubt this strengthened them in their

purpose, if for no other reason than that they might be agreeable to their hostess.

And yet, amidst these recurring shadows, and although no word or even the vaguest rumor had been received concerning Twain, Mrs. Holt and her guests did not permit the depression of the unusual business in which they were engaged to weigh them down completely. Aside from the exchange of dinners and teas, on the yacht and at the Alcade's house, they had spent the time in short excursions along the coast, both by land and by water. Eventually, when it was discovered that lack of sufficient exercise was bringing in its wake the inevitable results—indigestion and additional adipose—it was at once decided that those of the little company who chose to do so would invade the hills on horseback.

"Such miserable looking animals," exclaimed Mrs. Holt when talking with Doctor Richardson about it. "Such little beasts, too—mules aren't they?"

"Native burros, madam," replied the Doctor. "Yes, they are quite small, and yet very strong; they will carry their own weight easily."

Mrs. Holt winced; she had taken on flesh at a rapid rate since coming to San Enrique, and thought the Doctor might be guying her, in retaliation for her deprecations of the medical profession. But the Doctor did not perceive her agitation, as she imagined, for he proceeded to expatiate upon the rudeness of things in Mexico.

This new diversion was attended by some difficulty in providing animals for all of the party.

"Only men's saddles," said Bolston. "Do you think the ladies—"

"Oh, we've saddles of the other kind on board, plenty of them," exclaimed Mrs. Holt. "Clairisse attended to that."

"Good," rejoined Bolston. "How thoughtful of her."

"Won't it be jolly!" exclaimed Margaret. "Such fun. I long to start. Mother, dear, we have left the world of artifice and glitter far behind, and are living with nature again."

But Mrs. Holt did not partake of her daughter's enthusiasm.

"Your mother will remain with the 'Penelope,'" she replied. "I'm told that there are many centipedes and tarantulas in the hills. Besides, I do not like horses, either, the kind they have here."

"How many will there be?" inquired Bolston, counting on his fingers. "You, Grey, of course; you are a good horseman; I have seen you in the saddle. And Mrs. Grey; she rides well. The young ladies—none better, I am sure; three ladies and one gentleman. Don José, the Doctor and I, but we do not count."

"One more, Mr. Bolston," interposed Mrs. Holt. "My housekeeper, Clairisse, must go also. She was formerly a trained nurse, and can ride a broncho if necessary. I brought her especially for Mr. Twain, the poor soul! And the Senora and her daughter, too. I am surprised that you have forgotten them, Mr. Bolston."

"Pardon me, Mrs. Holt," said he, "I had not forgotten them."

"Then, I beg your pardon," she replied, giving him a searching look, for by this time he was quite red about the face and neck, and the others were smiling, the Doctor audibly.

Don José, under the Englishman's directions, had pressed into service ten of the best saddle animals in the village. They were not Arabs, it is true—such as the steeds that Ninus collected, six thousand years ago, for his expedition into Egypt, even before Ninevah was built. But these unpedigreed animals could "carry their own weight," as the Doctor had averred. For Grey, whose eighty and one hundred pounds furnished an item that must be considered, the Don set aside his own, a good-sized mustang of agreeable gait and disposition. The

Don, owing probably to the simple life which had so impressed Mrs. Holt, tipped the scales at something like a hundred and a quarter; he would ride one whose size conformed to his lesser weight.

For Mrs. Grey and the young ladies, four local steeds, favorites among the village senoras, the few who were given to horseback exercise, were selected. The Senora and Juanita had their own animals; and to Clairisse—poor woman, she had not been in a saddle for almost two years—a typical broncho was assigned; for had not her mistress declared she was equal to it? Clairisse herself did not object, although the appearance of the animal was decidedly against him. When the ungainly and dilapidated beast was brought out Grey laughed heartily.

"Bolston," he exclaimed, "where in the name of grace did you find that hair trunk? Is this the moulting season in Mexico?"

"No; Dan moulted when he was quite young," replied the Englishman, "and the hair has never grown out. Dan has a history."

"Well, I can easily believe it," exclaimed Grey. "Daniel looks as if he might have been in the lion's den at some remote period of his existence."

"Poor Dan!" said Margaret, stroking his neck. "They are making fun of you."

And Dan wagged his only whole ear as if to express his unconcern, or it may have been on account of his appreciation of her solicitude. Dan had lost most of his other ear in consequence of an altercation he once had with a Texas cow puncher, who bet ten dollars that he could ride him, and lost the money. That was years ago, shortly before Daniel came to judgment.

"But what about Dan's history, Mr. Bolston," inquired Enid, as the party rode away in single file toward the western hills,

Don José in the lead and the Englishman bringing up the rear, so that he might keep an eye on the ladies' saddle girths. "Why was he named Dan?" she asked, with increasing interest in the "hair trunk."

"It is a mere tradition," replied Bolston. "His real name is Dandazzler."

"Dandazzler!" exclaimed Margaret. "How classical!"

"Mythological, I should say," remarked Grey.

"What does it mean, Mr. Bolston?" inquired Margaret.

"Up in Texas, where Dan sprang from, whatever is extraordinary is accorded an extraordinary name. For instance, a man or horse or anything possessing unusual qualities is referred to as 'a humdinger,' 'a whirlwind,' or 'a crackerjack.' Mind you, these are Texas terms, not mine! Well, even these appellations were too insipid to cover Dan's case. It was necessary to coin a word that would give him special distinction. So they called him the Dandazzler."

"Without root or branch, from an etymological standpoint," suggested Margaret.

"No roots or branches for bronchos," remarked Grey. "A ball bat is the right thing to have within reach when dealing with them."

"As the story goes," continued Bolston, "a ball bat had no effect on Dan. They were obliged to put iron boots on him, with chains attached. Hence his dilapidated condition."

"Iron boots and chains!" the ladies exclaimed in unison. "How cruel! Does it make you nervous, Clairisse?"

"Oh, no! Dan is very good—now."

"And why iron boots and chains, Mr. Bolston?" asked Margaret.

"Well, no one could ride this particular broncho. When he had disabled two or three cowboys, after throwing them, and

then jumping on them with all four feet at once, like a wild deer on a venomous snake—”

Just then Dan stepped into a badger hole, and went down in front, Clairisse going over his head on to the soft ground. The ladies screamed. Dan extricated himself from the hole and, turning away from the trail, fell to eating grass on the hillside. Bolston was off his horse in a jiffy and helped Clairisse to her feet. Being uninjured, she was soon back in the saddle, and the procession moved on. Don José pulled his broad sombrero down over his eyes to hide his smile; Grey let out a great ha! ha! that moved the echoes.

“Iron boots and chains for a dear, gentle, harmless thing like that! I don’t believe a word of it, Dan,” remarked Mrs. Grey, sympathetically.

“Go on, Mr. Bolston, with the story, please,” said Enid. “Clairisse, look out for the holes.”

“A broncho boot,” continued Bolston, “consists of a sort of bracelet of iron to which is welded a chain a foot or more in length. These anklets are clasped upon the animal’s hocks—that is, an animal of Dan’s sort before his baptism. Then he is turned loose, with several cowboys using whips and sticks to keep him moving. He kicks and bucks and plunges until he is completely exhausted. He is bruised and sore from the chains with which he has whipped himself into submission, and when he is subdued and lies prostrate upon the ground, the cowboys sit on him, crawl over him. He never kicks or bucks again, and ever after the rattle of a chain makes him tremble with fear. Then the anklets are removed, and the broncho is what they call *busted*. ”

“Who could have had the heart to invent such a torture?” exclaimed Margaret.

“It is said he was a man from New England, who had a cattle ranch in Texas,” replied Bolston.

"No doubt about that," remarked Grey. "Who else, other than a Yankee, would have thought of conserving the surplus power of a broncho and then hitching him to it in such fashion as to have him do his own busting?"

"Dan, according to the tradition," continued Bolston, "thought about the matter a good deal. His feelings were deeply injured; and, finally, finding himself at large one day, he came across the line into Mexico, expatriating himself, as it were, from Texas."

"Bolston," said Grey, "that is a good story anyway, no matter how it came that the Dandazzler got into the hair-trunk class. Why have you not told me the story until now?"

"I hadn't thought to tell it."

"Do you mean to say," inquired Grey in an incredulous tone, "that you haven't thought to tell as good a one as that until now? Honestly, Bolston, had you yourself ever heard it before today?"

"Arthur, dear, you do not mean to reflect upon Mr. Bolston's veracity?" protested Mrs. Grey.

"On the contrary, I pay him a great compliment," he replied.

"A wonderful imagination, Mr. Bolston," suggested Margaret. "If Mr. Grey is correct in his conclusions, you should enter the field of the dramatist."

Bolston smiled good naturedly, when Juanita looked his way. Yet, he did not refer to his half jesting agreement to write a play in which she would act the leading rôle, and all the people, good and bad, connected with this tale would be featured in the program.

He was deeply in love with her. This he must have confessed to himself, although, having thought about it a great deal, it is doubtful if at this moment he would have confessed so much to her. Unfortunately for this wary, over-cautious

Briton, he could not put himself in Juanita's place; nor see with her eyes, nor feel with her sensitive, perceptive heart. Was it selfishness that prompted him to think altogether of his own situation? Still, there is none among all the human passions that is more selfish than love. It was this that was consuming Juanita; it was another and more practical phase of love that was absorbing Ralph Bolston, as he believed.

Indulging the glowing reflections of his active mind, as they rode along, he was thinking of the good fortune of Twain, who, the Englishman had no kind of doubt, must return very soon to have near him always the woman who loved him.

How vastly different it was with himself, he thought. Before many days he must take final leave of Old Mexico. The only woman that had ever caused him to sigh; the one fair creature who had stirred his tenderest emotion, would remain—if to forget him, never by him to be forgotten.

Contrive as he might to dispel these welling thoughts, perforce he found it necessary, she riding so gracefully there near him, to give up the effort, and to submit—how readily he alone knew—to the sweeter memory of her plaintive words—the very hills seemed to echo them in his ears—"if you do not entirely forget."

On the yacht that evening when they were at dinner—and such appetites after the long ride!—the "Penelope's" cabin resounded with levity. Even Enid was moved to laughter at the witty bandinage. Her father was persuaded to tell the story of the Dandazzler, although he protested the author of it should not be deprived of that privilege, and he gave it such embellishment and so many humorous variations that the Englishman commended him highly for the power of his creative fancy; whereat they were all much amused. The editor himself was now the most promising disciple of Munchausen.

CHAPTER XXIII

FRESH COMPLICATIONS

But there was another diversion in store for the excellent company of the "Penelope" and those of the stone house on the hill; also for the dusky inhabitants of San Enrique, who already considered themselves to have been greatly favored by the presence of so many gentle folk in their midst.

After breakfast the morning following the jaunt to the hills on horseback, Enid, the Doctor and the Englishman were sitting beneath the awning of the forward deck. They were speaking, as often before, of the generosity of Mrs. Holt in having brought Enid to the Caribbean for her health.

"How fortunate we are to have Margaret with us," said Enid. "She is all sunshine, the dear good angel, and so devoted."

"A rare girl, indeed," remarked the Doctor; "so unlike the young ladies of her monied station in life—too many of them given over completely to the frivolities that appear to go with wealth. Her father is rich almost beyond computation, hopelessly immersed in the business of making money. One would suppose that his only daughter would prefer to identify herself with the titled aristocracy of Europe, and finally, to bestow her hand, if not her love, upon someone of inherited distinction—a duke or a count or something of that sort."

"Margaret Holt's heart will precede her hand, Doctor," re-

plied Enid. "Should she wed a titled foreigner it will be for love's sake, not for the distinction of it."

"There is a Russian captain of noble lineage, is there not?" inquired the Doctor, who was not then aware of Page Bannister's sentiments toward the multi-millionaire's daughter. Nor could he have believed she would be likely to bestow her hand upon a representative of the struggling, plodding proletariat, great leader and advocate though he was. But, as yet, he did not know of Margaret's many rare gifts of character, and the little value she placed upon her vast fortune in money.

"Nothing serious, I am sure," replied Enid. "Margaret's brother and the Captain are chummy. They sailed for the north together in young Holt's dirigible just before we left the Capital."

"It is reported that young Holt is a good loser," remarked the Doctor, laughingly. "Mere gossip, no doubt."

Just then Margaret came upon the deck, and the Doctor, to change the subject, at the Englishman's expense if he could, spoke of "the fair Juanita" and wondered how she was this morning. Margaret overheard the Doctor's inquiry and exclaimed:

"Isn't she delightful? What a pity she must live in this sleepy little town."

"It will not be for long, Miss Holt," replied the Doctor. "Some brave knight will come to storm the parental battlements and carry her away. Such charming beauty as hers cannot remain permanently secluded."

If Bolston's pulse throbbed somewhat faster as a result of the Doctor's enthusiastic eulogy of Juanita he alone was aware of that fact; yet he could not hide the color that came in his swarthy face.

"I am at a loss to understand how our friend here could have had the heart to conceal from me the existence of the

charming girl until after the ‘Penelope’ came,” continued the Doctor. “Do you think it fair, Miss Holt?” Through the tail of his eye he was regarding Bolston closely. Enid and Margaret were greatly amused.

“Being a married man, Doctor, I did not suppose you would be interested, even in so lovely a woman as she,” replied Bolston, dryly.

“A lovely woman!” exclaimed the Doctor. “The term is too tame. An incomparable, intoxicating, a palpitating beauty would be the more fitting designation. How could you forget—”

“And you, Doctor, will not forget—that you are ineligible, being a benedict. Of course you will not.”

“But in my transmutation from bachelor to benedict I did not promise to become a monk. The married man who shuts his eyes or suppresses his senses in the presence of ravishing charms such as this remarkable girl possesses indulges an indignity toward his wife.”

The others laughed heartily, but neither of them made reply to this new interpretation of marital ethics—new at least to them. Then, indirectly, the Doctor apologized to Margaret by bestowing upon her many compliments. He spoke of the freshness of her cheeks, the clearness of her eye, the zephyry appearance of her hair. Margaret blushed, but did not protest. She perceived the Doctor’s embarrassment, after his encomiastic reference to Juanita, and was too polite to add to it, as some women would have done, by rudely declining to accept second place in his list of beauties.

At this Bolston excused himself and went to join Mrs. Holt, Mrs. Grey and Martha, who had just appeared from below.

“A wonderful chap—big enough to be at the head of a big government, or to lead a great army in a great war; so true and so unselfish, too”—was the Doctor’s panegyric on Bolston

as the latter strode away; to all of which the young ladies enthusiastically agreed.

"Isn't he splendid?" exclaimed Margaret, her eyes following him admiringly.

But what, among all reasonable possibilities, could be the occasion for the commotion in the village just then? Was it a fire? By no means; the adobe buildings were not insured. That were unnecessary, for they were as immune from the ravages of flame as an asbestos curtain in a theatre. Nor could it be a horserace, which was a too common event in that locality.

"Ah, maravilloso!" See the black, moving object in the sky. "Un globo aerostalico!" It was a rare sight for the dusky denizens of San Enrique. A very few of them had ever been far enough away from home, and then only on *fiesta* occasions, to see a balloon ascension. Yet, this balloon had no rope attached to it to keep it from getting away and with which to draw it back to earth again like the balloons at fair time in Tampico. This one was moving steadily forward, at a good rate of speed. Stranger still, it was curving downward toward San Enrique. Now it was over the little cemetery; they could hear the whir of its machinery; it was settling gracefully in some vacant lots back of the church. "Pasmoso! Extraordinario!" It had stopped. A man was alighting from its carrier. There were three men. By this time almost the entire population of the town had gathered around the remarkable object, Susie with the rest, for she had gone to the village on an errand.

"Is this San Enrique?" inquired one of the men, a likely-looking young fellow dressed in a khaki suit of becoming make, with leggings and a close fitting cap to match.

"*Si, señor,*" from several natives who had ventured to come within speaking distance.

"Then we will anchor here," said the young man to his two

companions, who were similarly clad and of decidedly foreign appearance.

The one who made the inquiry in regard to San Enrique was Stephen Holt; his companions were Captain Mikleskoff and Ivan Petroffsky, the navigator.

When Young Holt and the prospective Russian count boarded the "Penelope" the loving mother was amazed, astonished almost beyond utterance. She gathered her son to her bosom and shook hands with the Captain, cordially.

"Stephen! you dear boy," she exclaimed when she found her tongue, "what does this mean? Where did you come from, and when?"

"Just now, mother—from the Capital; Dad is well. We thought it would be a good joke to surprise you."

Soon the new arrivals were surrounded by the others, who congratulated them upon their fine descension into the village.

"But how about the north pole, Stephen?" asked Margaret, with a rippling laugh.

"Oh, we went up that way as far as any of them, I reckon. Go look for our tracks!"

"Had anyone seriously supposed the Russian would go about looking for the north pole, in his present state of mind, and stay on the job?" said Grey, aside, to the Doctor.

Now, San Enrique, as heretofore indicated, was a very small town, devoid of excitements. There were no theaters or other places of amusement where the restless spirit of Stephen Holt could be gratified; no inducement to midnight revelling on the Rialto, where the surplus energies of erotic youth might be exchanged for next morning headaches and tousled fine linen—nothing, indeed, which would stir the police to the exercise of authority to preserve the peace and require a ten dollar tip to "say nothing about it."

"The place is dead and buried," exclaimed Stephen to his mother. "What can one do here to enjoy one's self?"

"Not so bad, Stephen; there are some excellent people here—the Alcalde, his gracious wife and their charming daughter; she is *so* beautiful."

"Do you hear, Captain—a beautiful girl! We will make love to her, and then carry her away in the dirigible, the sweet young thing. What a romance!"

Stephen Holt was seldom serious about anything. He was overflowing with youthful spirit—adventurous, reckless, particularly so with his father's money. However, without the least foreknowledge of what was in store for him, he had come to slumbering, somnolent San Enrique for a decidedly new experience—new at least in its consequences to him.

Juanita Guerrero, from the veranda of the stone house on the hill that witnessed Ralph Bolston's first enthrallment, observed the descending dirigible, and through the long glass, as Susie termed it, had seen the three strangers step from the carrier. Being familiar with the uses of aircraft and having heard Mrs. Holt speak regretfully of her son's flight to the north pole, she found no difficulty in guessing the meaning of it.

Ah! it would be so very pleasant for Miss Holt to have the Russian captain near her, mused Juanita—"if she loves him as I love Ralph," she said, aloud, so that she might hear his very name, and recall for the thousandth time the scene on the great steel pier at Tampico.

"It was there! there! there!"—looking at her pretty hand—"that I felt the pressure of his warm lips—precious hand! I, too, will kiss you—for him. There! Why do you blush, blessed hand? Now you are white again. Is it because you have some fear? He does not love you? Ah! you blush once more. He does love you. He will come soon to us—to

kiss—you—yes, many times. I will try so hard not to be jealous of you in your happiness, dear hand of mine!"

In pursuance of Stephen's desire that there should be some excitement in San Enrique—the town that was "dead and buried"—his devoted mother felt it was incumbent upon her to provide some kind of amusement for him. But what should it be? He was "such a good boy" at their mountain home during the early summer, she was encouraged to hope he might become interested in the quaint architecture of the village, or in an excursion to Tampico and the Panuco river, or perhaps in the indolent natives, or the horses—the "mules." Having run the gamut of indulgences belonging to the rich, it was within maternal reasoning to believe that by this time he might be satiated with automobiles and dirigibles.

"Merciful heavens!" she exclaimed to herself; "I pray that he may never take to bull-bating and cock-fighting." In a measure she had reconciled herself to his weakness for gambling.

A happy thought! She would invite the Senora and Juanita to come aboard the yacht for dinner that evening. It would be pleasant for the Captain, too. Why had she not thought of it before? And so it fell out that Stephen and the Captain, having attired themselves in the regulation dress from their wicker chests in the dirigible carrier, were presented by Mrs. Holt to the female portion of the Guerrero household.

Something has been said of the impression Miss Guerrero made upon Ralph Bolston on the occasion of their first meeting; how the circumspect Englishman had struggled to subdue his feelings of admiration, and how, finally, he had been obliged to admit to himself that the task was too great, and to her that she was the most beautiful woman he had ever met.

With Stephen Holt the case was entirely different. He did not attempt to conceal his astonishment, nor, except in the

remotest degree, to curb his ardor. He devoured Juanita with his eyes—big blue eyes like his sister's, the Captain had so often been reminded; he embarrassed her with his smiles. She was not at all like some other girls he had known, and yet, something like—more like, perhaps, in that she was more fresh and wholesome; more beautiful in form, far more in feature. And did ever womankind possess such ravishing eyes, such teeth, or mouth or tempting lips? None within the range of his knowledge, which, for one of his age, had not been confined to narrow limits. In his admiring eyes she was incomparably beautiful, furnishing the model of all the perfection that Zeuxis failed to find in combination, after painting the boy and the grapes, in the hope of outdoing his young rival Parrhasius.

"My soul, Captain," said he to the Russian, when the ladies had stepped aside, "isn't she a dream? Aren't you glad we came?"

The Captain was glad, and yet he did not appear to be enthusiastic, for as yet Margaret had not seemed to be in any haste to be with him alone, thus giving him the opportunity for which he had come so great a distance—to tell her that even his sojourn in the frozen north had not cooled his undying passion.

"Captain, you are unsympathetic. You're never glad of anything on my account."

"Sorry for you, Stephen, on some accounts," replied the Russian, sententiously.

"What do you mean?" he demanded in a vexed and somewhat arrogant tone.

"Be careful, Stephen," replied the Russian; "remember the result of your last escapade—the blonde beauty of the Cayenne Comedy Company."

"What! Damn it, Captain, you are provoking," he replied,

moving toward the Russian, his face reddening. "What do you know of her? Explain yourself!"

"None of your pranks here, Stephen," continued the Russian. "Miss Guerrero is not so easy—that is evident."

"If you insist upon your veiled allusions," replied Stephen, now thoroughly angered, "you'll answer to me personally, do you understand?"

"Not so fast, my boy," was the reply. "I merely sought to warn you against your great weakness, but now that you compel me to be more explicit—well, you talked in your sleep in the compartment of the dirigible one night in Newfoundland. You may need my help, my boy. I am your friend. Quiet your nerves; the ladies are coming this way."

Stephen Holt, indubitable heir apparent to many millions, was now somewhat subdued. His supposed secret was known to Captain Mikleskoff, heir presumptive to a like number of millions, dependent, of course, upon the heart's wishes of Margaret Holt. During the remainder of the Guerrero visit that evening he was more guarded, less impetuous, in his attentions towards Juanita; so agreeable, indeed, that when he and the Captain were taking their leave, after escorting the Senora and her daughter to their home, the young lady gave them a cordial invitation to come again, to which they assented, Stephen remarking in his best style that it would be a great disappointment to him if he were not permitted to do so.

"But, Captain," said he as they returned to the yacht, "what man could refrain from loving that adorable creature—in an honorable way, I mean?"

"It is your right, Stephen, if you choose, and if she does not object."

"Object!" he cried; "object! She will love me—she must! she shall!" The Holt spirit was asserting itself. In great measure his persistence, when he set his mind upon the accom-

plishment of a purpose, was not unlike that of his strenuous father, who, according to a favorite boast of his own, never permitted "hell or high water" to thwart him. It was through the pursuit of this inflexible policy that he had acquired his wealth, never halting to consider the consequences to others.

At no time in his career, before then, had Stephen ever found himself in a situation where it was necessary to take account of the difference between the potency of love and the power of wealth. It was a distinction that had never occurred to him. What wealth could not obtain for him would not be worth acquiring. He was conscious of the possession of considerable personal attraction. If in this regard he should fail to impress this beautiful girl, what would she do when confronted with the allurement of untold riches? She would fall into his arms, of course. The courtship would be brief but business-like. He would possess her at all hazards.

"Object! Not on your life, Captain," he exclaimed. "She will be only too glad to get away from this lonesome place and take her proper position in the big world with me."

"Perhaps so, old fellow," remarked the Russian. "I wish you both much joy. Only let it be on the square."

And if young Holt lost a single moment in prosecuting his suit for Juanita Guerrero's hand it was because of his fond mother's admonitions against hasty marriages. Yet, even this did not sway him. It was, his mother had no doubt, his first love affair. He would think better of it in due time. Perhaps she had made a mistake in being the intermediary in bringing them together. Already she was ready for repentance.

"For, Stephen, my precious child, you are so young, and she, perhaps—well, you see their humble station in life. They are respectable enough, to be sure; yet your dear father would never forgive me if I did not warn you, even forbid it."

"Oh, mother, she is so fine in every way, and with her I

would be so very happy.. You would have no further cause to complain of me. I would settle down and be a man." He knew the art of pleading his own cause with his indulgent mother."

"A great inducement, Stephen," she replied, "but you must wait. Besides, the Alcalde and the Senora—she herself may not feel as you do about it."

"Oh, I talked with her today, mother, and she was so nice and agreeable about it. I told her—"

"Stephen! you impetuous boy."

"And I will marry her anyway, mother. No one will prevent it. Life will be nothing to me without her. I don't care for Dad's money, if he objects."

"Wait, and I will talk with your father about it," she reasoned. There now seemed nothing for her to do except to contend for time in which her son's passion might cool.

"Well, you may talk with Dad, but I know my own mind, mother," he replied.

"Go to Tampico and take the Captain. You will find diversion there," she argued.

"If Juanita will go, too," he replied.

And away he went to the Guerreros, to see Juanita and suggest a voyage in the dirigible. This boy's love-making was full of youthful force and vigor. It was direct, so unlike Ralph Bolston's, that Juanita was amused if not interested. No one had ever made love to her after this fashion. Believe as few of his glowing words as she would, his devoted attentions flattered her.

"In all my life," he would declare, "I have never loved anyone but you, sweet and adorable Juanita, and never shall." Then he would attempt to take her hand. At such times the one that Ralph Bolston had kissed so fervently would be

safely beyond Stephen's reach; the other one bewitchingly elusive—so near and yet so far.

"*Ah, madre mio!* Mr. Holt asks me to go in the dirigible to Tampico. What do you think?"

"*De ningun modo* (by no means) Juanita. Ah, nevair," exclaimed the Senora. Woman's prescience again—a mother's intuition.

CHAPTER XXIV

MRS. HOLT'S CAMPAIGN

But to wean the vehement Stephen from his newest fancy would certainly test the singular abilities of his resourceful mother. Further appeals to her son's reason (who that is madly in love has it?) would be futile; of this she was already fully convinced.

Without having any knowledge to the contrary, the good woman had concluded that Miss Guerrero would be unable to withstand the onrush of Stephen's devoted endeavor, if, indeed, she did not encourage it. Close observer though she was, she did not know—how could she know?—of Bolston's capitulation to the fair doncellita. No more did Stephen, nor Margaret; not even the Senora nor Don José. All but Stephen, however, might have suspected it. And, too, Juanita was distrustful of her own compelling powers—that is, for some reason entertained from the beginning, she lacked confidence even in her subtle ability to impress the world-wise Englishman.

Nor had the tender incident on the Tampico pier served to completely reassure her. She could not rid herself of an innate dread of failure. It was an entirely different incentive that prompted Bolston's reserve—first, his native caution; second, his diplomatic training, and, third, his fear in regard to “the wrong woman.”

Had it been possible at this moment for Mrs. Holt to have

divined the contending thoughts in Juanita's mind, the plans that were now revolving in her own would have been subject to important emendation, no doubt.

In this situation, she sought Margaret and the Captain on the "Penelope's" deck one afternoon, and lost no time in opening her complicated campaign, for she had fully determined upon a course to pursue.

Almost a whole week of tender luxury in the society of Margaret Holt had not brought the polished, attractive and decorated Russian any nearer the goal of his ardent desire. And now, as the days were passing on the "Penelope," he found himself in the throes of a desperate effort to formulate new terms of endearment by which to win her favor. Yet, he had not overlooked the fact that, as a last resort, there was much he might say to her estimable mother, to whom the customs and people of Europe were of such absorbing interest that he had never failed to hold her attention when discussing the subject with her. So, Margaret, excusing herself and going below, the Captain turned his attention to Mrs. Holt. Margaret was not unaware of his new tactics; yet she could not find it in her sunny nature to put any obstacle in his way, had she desired to do so ever so much.

Stephen's persistent passion for Juanita was now a subject even for the village gossips. There was so little disguise about it the Captain ventured to refer to it.

"Love's young dream, no doubt," replied Mrs. Holt. "They will think differently in time."

"The lady appears to be quite self-possessed," remarked the Russian.

"A very sensible girl, Captain. She is older than Stephen. He is a mere child—so inexperienced. Miss Guerrero should marry a man twice his age, one with a world knowledge—Mr. Bolston, for instance, or, still more suitable, yourself, Captain."

The Russian was impressed. More, he must have experienced a thrill of astonishment, for he was facing an unexpected crisis. Had Mrs. Holt told him that he was not to be considered in the serious light of a prospective son-in-law she could not have made herself better understood. She had used Bolston's name, he had no doubt, merely as a cushion for himself to fall upon. Yet, the Captain resolved to make the best of the situation; he was not to be vanquished at the first onset.

"A most attractive lady, I grant you, Mrs. Holt," was his sympathetic reply. "But as for me—really, until you were kind enough not to omit me from the list of eligibles, I had never given the matter even a passing thought. Besides, it would be ungenerous in me, ignoble I may say, to think of supplanting Stephen in her affections."

"I could quite agree with you, Captain," she replied, "if they were really serious, he so young and she so deserving of a husband ripe in experience and wisdom. I will talk with the Senora on the subject."

Here was a situation! It was like two simultaneous shots from a single-barreled gun that was supposed not to be loaded. To use an expression that the Captain had so often heard from Stephen, it now began to look as if the Russian heiress-hunter had "overplayed his hand."

After several months of effort on the Captain's part to entice her love, Margaret, having repeatedly, yet gently, impressed him with the dubiousness of his suit, he had turned hopefully to her mother in the most confident expectation that he would be able to enlist her aid and sympathy, approaching the task by the exercise of all the deliberation and caution of the trained diplomat.

At the very outset, almost before his campaign had actually begun, he had been told, in terms that could not be misconstrued, there was little hope for him; that it was advisable he

should turn in another direction. And, as if to emphasize her conclusions, Mrs. Holt now generously proposed that she herself would make a personal appeal to Juanita's mother in his behalf.

Closely scanning her determined features and noting the positiveness of her tone, as Margaret's mother coolly sealed his fate, he began to realize the uselessness of present persuasion or protest. All that was now left for him to do was to believe that at some future time he might swerve her by making a clean breast of his predicament; by declaring his love for Margaret, throwing himself, in his desperation, upon the mercy of her mother. Yet, when Mrs. Holt proposed that he accompany her to the stone house on the hill—it would be impolite for him to decline going with her—he abandoned, for the time being, this last ray of hope, and, in sheer helplessness, followed her to the Guerrero home. Perforce, he was ready for the sacrifice.

Having established her prestige in the business of adjusting the affairs of the heart, about which Captain Mikleskoff had once protested to Margaret he knew so little, Mrs. Holt found no difficulty in contriving to leave the Captain and Juanita on the veranda while she and the Senora proceeded to an upper room to examine the priceless family treasures which had been handed down through the generations, some of them dating back to the expulsion of the Moriscoes from Spain.

"Captain Mikleskoff would greatly enjoy seeing these quaint heirlooms," remarked Mrs. Holt, in an indifferent tone. "He, too, comes of a distinguished family."

"So fine!" exclaimed the Senora. (This was her favorite expression for things superlative.)

"Yes," continued Mrs. Holt; "in due time he will be a count."

"Ah! muger de conde—condesso, hes wife. So fine!"

"To be sure ; his wife will be a countess."

"Your daughtair, Mess Margaret, de nobale Captain, so fine ! So it is talk for *aldeanos*" (the villagers), exclaimed the Senora in congratulatory accents.

"Oh, no, not at all," replied Mrs. Holt, shrugging her shoulders. "No love, Senora. There must be love in marriage."

"Too bad it is," said the Senora sorrowfully. "Mess Margaret to love, so fine!"

"Margaret, the dear child, is still in possession of her own heart, Senora. The right man will come along some day, no doubt, and I will be obliged to give her up, I suppose."

Having undeceived the Senora, as she now believed, in regard to the subject of village gossip, and, incidentally, while admiring the heirlooms, having pointed to the Captain's distinguished lineage and promising prospects, Mrs. Holt, confident of her ability as a maker and an unmaker of matches, was ready for the next move on the matrimonial carpet, whatever it might turn out to be.

On the veranda Juanita, the tempting creature, gracefully reclining in the hammock, the fatal guitar on her lap, was cautiously quizzing the Russian. It is not strange that she should have chosen as the subject of her interrogations the tender relations supposed to exist between Margaret and the Captain. Coming, as he recently had, from so great a distance, with no other reason that could be guessed than to join Margaret, was sufficient to excite friendly comment.

Juanita's secret in regard to her attachment for the placid Englishman was so well guarded that she did not hesitate to engage in bantering pleasantries concerning the heart-throbs of others ; and as for the attentions of the impetuous Stephen she was not disposed to evade retaliation, for she assumed that their relations were well understood, even by the gossiping villagers.

The Captain did undertake to counter her inquiries and suggestions relative to Margaret and himself by changing the subject to Stephen's fervent attentions.

"It is true," she replied, "that Mr. Holt comes here quite frequently, and he professes some interest in me; yet, Captain, it is his boyish fancy, nothing more. His good mother disapproves, on account of his age, and that is a sufficient reason, were there none other."

"Yet," replied the Captain, "there is an old adage about love and locksmiths."

"That applies only when love is intensely mutual, Captain. Most women prize the privilege to choose, among so many; and there is so much time before the age of thirty."

"And so little afterward," he replied with a laugh.

"If she fails before then, she still has her independence and her experience to aid her," rejoined Juanita. "In her riper judgment she may meet with greater reward, if she waits. As for me, there is abundant time; I am out of school only a few months, you know."

Juanita had succeeded in making it so plain to the Captain's receptive mind that she did not believe in haste, he had no doubt that Mrs. Holt would be greatly relieved. By this time he had guessed the reason for her deep solicitude; it was Stephen's welfare, not his, that concerned her.

The important moment had now arrived for him to resume his campaign with Margaret's mother. He would lose no time in assuring her that the fair Juanita was far from being ready to enter the dual state.

And so it was that the Captain, when Mrs. Holt and the Senora appeared, was ready to return to the "Penelope," eager for an opportunity to declare himself without further deliberation. The coveted time came when he and his hostess reached

the yacht's upper deck, and Mrs. Holt seated herself preparatory to receiving the Captain's report of progress.

"It is useless, my dear madam," began the Captain, "for any man to hope for recognition in that quarter at present. Poor Stephen will be disappointed. The young lady prides herself upon the fact that there is ample time, in her case, to choose a husband. This much she vouchsafed quite positively without knowing that I might have matrimonial intentions in her direction, which I may frankly say, my dear Mrs. Holt, I have not. On the contrary, it is but just to you, to Miss Margaret and to myself, that I should tell you how exceedingly happy I would be if you could look with favor upon the only desire of my life. I love your daughter."

"And does Margaret reciprocate your feelings?" she inquired in a tone that was not without sympathy.

"I cannot say it with the positiveness that I would like," he answered; "yet I have thought that she might not be averse to my suit, if it is agreeable to you. My coming to you at this time is intended to relieve you of further effort with the Senora, and to ask your indulgence of my hope."

"Margaret's happiness, my dear Captain, is so precious to me that I could not find it possible to interfere, unless, to be sure, I thought she was about to make a life's mistake. She must decide; I can only advise, and not until she requests it. My kindly feelings toward you, Captain, will not be misconstrued, I am sure."

"I should despise myself if I failed to understand or to appreciate your considerateness," he replied, "or to admire your daughter's sincerity and to respect her for her sentiments toward me, whatever they may be."

Summing up the situation a little later, the Captain found it impossible to delude himself with the thought that he had made the least bit of progress. Resolving not to accept Mrs. Holt's

declaration as an ultimatum, he waited for an opportunity to make a final appeal to Margaret. If he found her in the same indefinite frame of mind in which he left her when last he pressed his cause, he would beg her not to foreclose him forever, but to allow him to stimulate his existence in anticipation.

When he again unburdened his soul to the winsome Margaret, not omitting to tell her of his interview with her mother, she found it difficult to conceal her distress. The Captain pleaded with a new fervor. He was intensely in earnest, and Margaret's heart was sorely touched, as it would have been had she found a wounded bird by the roadside. Such was her sympathetic nature.

"Mother is right about it, Captain," she replied, frankly. "It is a matter that I must decide, for it concerns not only my own happiness, but the happiness of others. We two have been good friends. For my part I have sometimes thought it might be something more, and again—but there," giving him her hand, which he pressed to his lips, "with me it will never be anything less than friendship. Please do not ask for more than that—not now."

"I bless you!" he exclaimed. "With the encouragement that you have now given me, I promise not to be importunate."

In truth, Margaret's declaration that she might have thought it something more than friendship, but it must not be more than that—"not now"—was a mere repetition; she had said as much on previous occasions, in the days of his passionate pleadings and alternate melancholy at the Blue Ridge. Again he was doomed to wait.

The status of Captain Mikleskoff having been definitely fixed, for the present at least, he reluctantly announced his intention of returning to Washington. Mrs. Holt experienced a feeling of relief, not that the Captain's presence was objectionable; she was looking hopefully forward to the time when the

enamored Stephen, "the dear boy," would take himself away from San Enrique for good and for all. She had persuaded herself that he would go away with the Captain, as they had come, in the dirigible, and that his departure would mark the end of his passion for Juanita Guerrero. Such was her abiding confidence.

CHAPTER XXV

A NAVIGATOR'S NERVE

Now, it so happened that Stephen was contriving some plans of his own. This was in accordance with the Holt nature. To have yielded meekly to his mother's wishes; to have resigned the conquest of Juanita's heart and admitted his failure in the controlling motive around which all else now revolved in dull obscurity, would be a reflection upon the reputation of his indomitable and invincible sire. His sturdy millionaire father, thus discredited, would feel humiliated; of this Stephen had no doubt. The Holt record for "doing things" must be maintained. In the matter of success there must be no blemish upon the family escutcheon. Thus persuaded, Stephen put new energy into his efforts, already at a stage sufficiently fervent to set a whole realm on fire.

When his dirigible was again in the air, a full mile above the undulating hills; with his capable navigator at the wheel, the airship's planes now set for greater altitudes, the blades of the white propellers revolving at utmost speed, the morning light from the east striking them full and fair, until, to the Senora and Susie, watching from the veranda, and to many others who were witnesses of the flight, the purring wheels, like two great chrysanthemums hanging gracefully from what resembled an oblong, fantastically-colored vase—Stephen emerged from his luxurious compartment at the rear of the swaying

carrier, closing the door behind him. He spoke to the navigator.

"Head 'er to the northwest," said he in a whisper.

"I supposed we were going to the San Madres," replied the navigator.

"To the northwest, Airskootsky." This was a pleasant, sportive term applied to Ivan Petroffsky when Stephen was in a condescending mood.

"How far away?" inquired Ivan.

"To the Grand Canyon—anywhere—New Mexico—Arizona—away from the spying world."

Then Stephen returned to the compartment. He was not there alone; there was one other—Juanita Guerrero. She was with him by invitation—a very pressing invitation, many times repeated in the past few days, yet never accepted until now. At first her mother had objected. Afterward, when the novelty of a dirigible at San Enrique had worn off, and Bolston, on his recent arrival from Washington, had flown in it with Stephen to the picturesque San Madres, the Senora's prejudice against airships had been overcome in some degree. Surely, she thought, there could be no danger, and Juanita would return the same day.

So, Juanita was with Stephen in the compartment, and Ivan had been instructed to take a northwesterly course for an indefinite destination. Of course he would not disobey the orders of his affluent employer.

It was now time for the midday meal. To have luncheon among the clouds would be a rare experience for Juanita. So, Stephen touched a spring; a polished mahogany board came down from the wall. It filled the narrow space between Juanita and him, as they sat facing each other in the wicker seats. Then he opened his larder. It was filled with food of many varieties and in great quantity, sufficient for a long voy-

age. In another cabinet there were divers bottles, some of them containing special vintages not unlike that of which Eph Fox and Eva Farnum had partaken at Fox's private room in the C. Q. D. building, when he kissed Eva and complimented her on her beauty. It was, indeed, a promising prospect, thought the millionaire's son, who was never quite so happy as now.

In no time at all, the mahogany board was covered with choice viands and tempting nectars. Juanita's appetite had been enhanced by the exhilarating air. She ate and she talked. Her eyes sparkled like diamonds with countless facets, only they were softer and more beautiful than the most costly of precious stones. These dark and glorious gems were suffused with soulful love. Stephen was in Elysium. Still, Juanita would not partake of the nectar. This was a great disappointment to him; he had expected her to act differently, here in the seclusion of his compartment, away from the restraining influence of the Senora. It was all so very cozy, with none to see nor to interfere with anything that might take place.

So it was that Stephen drank for both of them until he was overflowing with prosperity. He told Juanita of his father, of his great wealth, one half of which would some day be his. He told her of the Holt summer home in the mountains, of their great winter palace in the city, where so many distinguished people were wont to assemble, and he described his father's elaborate dirigible.

"It is much larger than mine," said he. "Dad lives in it. He travels at night, sleeping among the clouds. The rarified air has restored his health. He houses his machine in dirazines, one at Ashhurst, one at our winter mansion at the Capital, and one at the top of the Holt skyscraper in New York. Leaving his machine on the skyscraper, he enters his offices by a

spiral stairway through the roof. Thus he avoids the vulgar crowds below."

"How wonderful!" exclaimed Juanita.

"It's a great thing to be wealthy, dear, precious girl. Think of what is in store for you, sweet one, if only you will love me."

Then Stephen, after another draft of nectar from the choicest vine, moved nearer. He was now at Juanita's side. He tried to take her hand in his. He did not succeed. Then he threw his arms around her and made a vigorous effort to kiss her. In this he failed, for she said something to him that caused him to pause. She was so unlike some others he had met! Though the grape was in his blood, his faculty of comprehension had not been lost.

He looked dejectedly through the little window for a moment. Then he gasped an exclamation of surprise. They were over the sea, some distance from land. The dirigible was moving steadily to the east. He rose suddenly, muttering an imprecation against the barbaric inhabitants of Russia. Then he left the compartment, closing the door with a slam.

Juanita was relieved when he was gone. She did not know the cause of his hasty exit; yet she, too, could see they were not traveling in the direction of the San Madres. That was a mere coincidence; something might be wrong with the machinery. The thing that was troubling her most was the warning admonition of her mother. Never again, she promised herself, would she go contrary to her wishes.

"Where are you going?" demanded Stephen to Ivan. "Your orders were to keep a northwesterly course."

Juanita did not hear Stephen's remark. The whir of the blades, the grinding of the wheels, drowned his voice. Besides, the door was closed, and he was speaking in subdued tones. Nevertheless, they were earnest and dominating.

"You directed me to steer for the San Madres," replied the

navigator. "Then you changed for a point in another direction—far away. I too have deemed it wise to change."

"What right have you to—"

"The right of the man I at least claim to be," interrupted Ivan, for whom the knout had had no terrors in Russia.

"Your insolence is unbearable. I will discharge you."

"I will discharge myself when we are at San Enrique again, Mr. Holt.."

"Turn her to the northwest, or I will take the wheel myself," Stephen demanded, moving as if to do so.

"I will turn her to the south, Mr. Holt, toward San Enrique. You seem to forget they are still searching for Twain; that Akers is in jail."

The navigator pulled the slender cable that regulated the rudder. Then he lowered the forward planes. The dirigible swerved to the south and was dropping to a lower altitude. Then Stephen, now angered beyond all self-control, struck the navigator on the side of the face with his open hand.

The next instant he was struggling at the bottom of the carrier. The powerful Ivan had hit him. Stephen received the blow just under his right eye, and went down with a thud. It may have been a "dull thud," yet Juanita heard the commotion; she was now quite certain that something was wrong with the machinery. She did not "lose her head;" she did not scream nor rush from the compartment. If her surmise were the correct one, of course it would be necessary to return to San Enrique, now almost within sight. In half an hour they would be there. It was a comfort to know that she would soon be with her mother and Susie again, and her heart gave a great bound when she thought of the sturdy Englishman.

When Stephen had struggled to his feet he made a mad rush for the big Russian, who dealt him a swift uppercut under

the other eye. It was like the numbing jolt of a catapult. Stephen was down again. He did not get up immediately.

The navigator returned to the wheel, looked through the heavy glass window for his bearings and adjusted the rudder and the planes. After this he helped Stephen to his feet and wiped his bleeding face with a wisp of packing. Neither of the men had spoken since the scrimmage began.

Then Juanita, becoming anxious, pushed open the door of the compartment. At the sight of Stephen, who was sitting on a low stool, holding his handkerchief to his closed eyes, the blood streaming over his face, saturating his white duck clothing, recently so immaculate—when she beheld the gruesome sight, Juanita screamed and asked what had happened.

"The machinery," answered Ivan. "It is acting badly this morning. He is not seriously hurt."

"Yes, it was the machinery," said Stephen, in submissive accent. "I will be all right soon."

Then she moved toward him as if she would lend assistance; by this time she swooned. Ivan carried her to the compartment, laid her gently upon the reclining seat at the other side and dashed a goblet of water in her face. Again he readjusted the planes and the rudder.

From the veranda of the stone house on the hill the Senora and Susie had watched the dirigible in its circuit over the Caribbean. Their distress was somewhat relieved when the airship turned toward the village. By the time it had arrived they were at its anchoring place behind the church, anxiously waiting. An unusual number of the natives had also observed its course and were on hand to learn the cause of the strange proceeding, for they seemed to know that the dirigible was off that morning for the San Madres.

Juanita's swoon passed away before Ivan had made the dirigible fast. She was now leaning over the edge of the carrier

waving her handkerchief at her mother and Susie. "I am safe," she exclaimed, "but Mr. Holt is badly hurt. A serious accident to the machinery."

Ivan assisted his master aboard the "Penelope." Stephen went to his cabin, where his mother came in great distress to administer to his necessities. Doctor Richardson was summoned.

It was ten days before the leeches had finished with Stephen's swollen eyes. After they had gorged themselves on the rich deposits of coagulated blood, and the black and blue-green discolorations had disappeared from his cheeks, where the dirigible's terrible catapult struck him, Stephen ventured to pay his respects at the stone house on the hill, and to humbly apologize to the Senora for having induced Juanita to go with him.

"That big moose of a navigator must have known that something was wrong with the machinery." This was his stereotyped remark when explaining the "accident."

Captain Mikleskoff tarried during his young friend's convalescence. He did not renew his suit for Margaret's hand, preferring to believe she would be more likely to look upon him with favor if he gave her time. "Not now" were her last words on the subject. "But when?" This was the question that was troubling him most. There was only one course for him to pursue; he must wait.

And now, the New Year having arrived a month ago, and Enid Grey's health being much improved—indeed, she was quite like her former self again—and nothing occurring that pointed to the whereabouts of Twain, why should Mrs. Holt's interesting company remain longer at San Enrique? Why not a voyage to Havana, now a possession of the Greater Republic, for it had only recently been taken over? This was a long anticipated step toward Manifest Destiny:—which takes me

back to that period in our national history that witnessed our nervous situation over the war with poor old Spain, prior to my sailing for the Orient; when our army and navy, weary of prolonged peace, and our "captains of industry," spurred by the avarice of trade conquest and the selfish, unpatriotic desire for war prices for their products, discovered a hostile pretext in "the Cuban barbarities of the Madrid Government." And so, in furtherance of the financial and industrial policy of the Mongers Guild, which, having acquired the choice plantations of the ill-starred Island, first securing a monopoly of the sugar business in the States, had sent Roberts, their plenipotentiary, to Washington, to formally advise the Government of its duties in the premises. This was the impelling power behind annexation. Still, like the opinions of numerous statesmen in regard to the later policy of Canadian reciprocity, this is mere persiflage.

Of course it was of no immediate concern to those of the "Penelope" whether Cuba was "free," or whether it was now the property of that saccharine section of the Mongers Guild known as the sugar trust; Havana would be no less interesting as a pleasure resort for the idle rich on account of that, for the harbor had been dredged of its miasmatic muck at public expense. So, after a short stay at this capital of the Antilles, the "Penelope" would sail for the Azores, "the land of the hawks." After that, on to Washington, where Congress was now struggling with the routine affairs of the short session, and preparations were making for the inauguration of the Altrocratic Bannister. All these matters must have been in the minds of Mrs. Holt's talented guests. Besides, in the course of the long journey some word might be gathered concerning the lost senator.

"Your little party of the war vessel must go with us, Mr. Bolston," said Mrs. Holt. "Send the cruiser back to New Orleans."

The Englishman protested that his own duties had so long been neglected he must resume them at the very earliest moment. It was by no means improbable that the wishes of Juanita would be the determining factor; yet he did not say so. Thanking the good lady for her kindness, Bolston took his way to the big stone house to breathe the perfumed atmosphere of his inamorata's presence.

Juanita had promised herself that she would explain her attitude toward the minor Holt, whose devotion and the dirigible "accident" now furnished a theme for gossip and speculation far beyond the precincts of San Enrique. Indeed, it was common property as far north as Matamoras, in Texas, whence the Dandazzler had come, and as far south as Tampico. The Englishman smiled as he listened to her recital, remarking that the boy should not be censured; there were those several years his senior, he said, who were equally as helpless as Stephen when under the spell of her irresistible charms.

Nor did the philosophic Briton seem to evince the slightest objection to Stephen's attentions. He reasoned well that the woman a man could love and who loved him in return could and should be trusted, declaring that only by this unselfish course would the worthiest supplicant for her favor finally succeed.

"A noble sentiment," replied Juanita. "Yet, is it not true that the ardent lover is often beset with jealousies, however unreasonable they may appear to be?"

"Selfish, distrustful lovers, perhaps," was the reply. "It is such as these, I imagine, who are the unhappiest."

Without intending to do so, he was imparting a valuable lesson—one that she will try not to forget. She was not unaware of the tendency of her Latin temperament toward those disturbing perplexities of mind and heart with which she was

immediately beset when this remarkable man first came into her life. She colored with shame as she recalled her allusions, on a previous occasion, to the savage retaliations of jealous women.

Perceiving her distress, and divining its cause, he sought to divert her reflections by relating his interview with Mrs. Holt concerning the prospective cruise to the Azores. This gave rise to a fresh commotion of her thoughts. The sailing of the "Penelope" portended the end of the sweetest dream of her existence. It meant the departure, perhaps for all time, of her ideal among men, the rare Briton who had taken possession of her heart, thrilling her with alternate joy and jealousy. In a measure, Juanita had prepared herself for this final blow; she was in constant fear that it must come and that she must learn to endure its consequences.

The cloud lifted the following day when Mrs. Holt came to say she would be glad to have Juanita and her mother join the "Penelope" party when they were ready to go away. Had Bolston inspired this welcome invitation? This was the first thought that came to Juanita. For some reason, which the Guerreros could not fathom, the good lady of the "Penelope" enjoined the closest secrecy in regard to the proposed voyage.

Nevertheless, before many days had passed, during which time Stephen was finding new excuses for postponing his departure for the north, his mother's secret leaked out.

"I have decided to return on the yacht, mother," said he. "The Captain may go in the dirigible with the navigator if he desires to do so, or he may come with us, as he likes."

For the moment Mrs. Holt was crushed. Still, she knew her son too well to waste words with him in argument. Then, with the thought that she might confuse him, and coming directly to the matter of his malady, she said:

"Yet, it is not certain the Guerreros will be with us."

"In that case I will remain here," he replied.

The following morning, when the cruiser was steaming away for New Orleans, in pursuance of the unsealed orders of the "Penelope's" commander, Grey and the Englishman fell to discussing ways and means whereby the ones "higher up" in the Twain abduction might be apprehended. Indeed, this was their daily theme. As time passed they evolved new theories and new plans. In every instance their theories and plans would be overthrown when they came to consider Martha Giddings' fate should it be decided to prosecute the offenders thus far known to be implicated.

About this time Grey received a momentous letter. It was from Cy Shirley, the Altrocratic manager in Senator Twain's state. It was momentous because it suggested "another step toward the top," as Grey remarked to Bolston. Shirley in his letter said there was much speculation in regard to the whereabouts of Giddings; that he was reported to be in Mexico at some famous springs, and yet no one seemed to know where the springs were. Martha's letter to Asher Wells, her betrothed husband, the letter with the subterfuge in it, had borne the intended fruit.

What disturbed the leading politicians, said Shirley in his letter, was the anxiety of Sam Ives. If anyone knew where Giddings was it must be he, and yet Ives was not disposed to make any explanation. He was nervous and despondent, and was losing interest in the campaign in behalf of Sloane, whose candidacy was then before the legislature. Moreover, Ives was in frequent touch with Eph Fox, who was likewise neglectful of Sloane's political welfare. "There is something more important on foot," declared Shirley, "than the senatorship. The C. Q. D. outfit are alarmed."

"Ives and Fox are concerned in this abduction," said Grey to Bolston, when he had finished reading Shirley's letter.

"Giddings holds the key to the situation. He must be closely watched. We must retain control over him."

"We have the real key to the situation right here," replied Bolston.

"How fortunate it is that we did not allow her to go back to Washington," exclaimed Grey. "I am beginning to see a great light, my friend. Already I have a plan in mind. We'll get Fox and Ives; do not fear. Leave it to me."

A little later Mr. Grey was sitting on the deck with Martha Giddings.

"My daughter has told me of your father's serious illness," he remarked. "I trust he is improving."

"Father writes me that he is better," replied Martha.

"He has friends near him, of course?"

"Yes; Mr. Bostwick sees him daily."

"Mr. Ives and Mr. Fox will take care, no doubt, that he does not want for attention or anything."

Martha colored. There was a certain hesitation in her reply that bespoke her thoughts. And yet she was not thinking of the connection of Ives and Fox with the abduction, for she did not know as to that. She was thinking of Eph Fox, of her father's subserviency to him, of his presuming attentions to her, of her good fortune in thus far avoiding the snares he had laid to entrap her. Then she said:

"They have not seen father since he came east. Being ill, he cannot assist them in their schemes. Men of their kind are not profuse in their sympathies where sympathy is not directly convertible into power."

"Very true," replied Grey. "And they would be the first to cry for help if trouble should come to them."

"If they were in distress father would surely try to assist them."

"Enid, as you know, has told me of your purpose in coming

here, Miss Giddings. I have thought of it a great deal, and would gladly assist you, if possible. Much depends upon your father's course."

"He will do anything, Mr. Grey, to relieve me; depend upon it, and I will never cease to bless you for your generous consideration."

"For the present," replied the editor, "he must decline to enter into further compact with them. He ought not to see them should they call at the rest cure. He must devote himself to you. Write him a guarded letter to that effect. You may say you have discussed the matter with me, and that I am your friend."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE HOMeward VOYAGE

Just before the "Penelope" weighed anchor Enid sought her benefactress—for such she now called Mrs. Holt—and told her how deeply grateful she was. The good woman was moved to tears before Enid had near finished; for while the millionaire's wife, as has been said, was of a practical turn, she had a soft place in her mother's bosom for distressed human kind. Nor had the vulgar surroundings of an affluent life suppressed the benevolent emotions which prompted her in rescuing this victim of overwrought sentiment from the doom of despair.

"So few of us are ever wholly understood," said she to Enid, between convulsive sobs. "How often I've wished to be like your dear mother—all sympathy and goodness. It is but natural that she should be as she is, never having known the seamy side of life. Her parents were rich and she was fortunate, to be sure, in being brought up in luxury. I was a farmer's daughter and knew how to milk the cows and churn the butter."

"What a happy girlhood you must have had," interposed Enid.

"I did not think so then," she replied. "My dream was of wealth, power, station. And now that I've got them, my heart yearns for the farm home again. But it is useless to repine. I must be content, if possible, with my miserable lot, devoting

myself to relieving distress wherever I find it. It makes me happy to think I was able to help you, my dear, even in my direct, positive and not altogether agreeable way."

"I am sure," said Enid, "you have been most agreeable. I know what you mean, but please do not disparage yourself. You have accomplished much more than if you had merely sympathized with me, for that only would have added to the depression when you were gone. But you called me back to my duty to myself, and if—"

"I know what you would say, dear. If Mr. Twain never returns, you at least will have been saved to revere his memory."

"And you my preserver," replied Enid. "I shall always love you as my other mother. Thank you—God bless you for your kindness."

Except from Margaret, and now and then a meager expression of appreciation from Stephen—usually forced from him by some unusually tender act of his mother's—Mrs. Holt's real greatness had never before received such recognition as this. She folded Enid to her breast, kissing her cheeks, the grateful tears falling *ad extremum*.

All the village inhabitants were at the waterfront when the yacht sailed away. It was a sorrowful assemblage, but none was more cast down in spirit than Don José Guerrero, who, for the first time in half his existence, was left as the sole occupant of the stone house on the hill; which means, as the reader will understand, that the Senora and Juanita were on board the "Penelope," and little Susie, too, who by this time had become so attached to the kindly old Alcalde, no doubt she would have been willing to have adopted him in her list of fathers.

Nor did she forget the spiritual one at Chorreras, to whom she sent a farewell letter. "Goodbye, my dear padre," she wrote. "I will not forget you. I have told them all about you and the little church. When I'm grown up and have some

money to spare you shall have a much bigger one, like I saw at Tampico, and many nice new things for the altar, and a clean white surplice for yourself. I hope that will be by the next Candlemas after this one—I mean the surplice; I can get that by then, but you may have to wait quite awhile for the new church, because it costs so much, and I don't yet know where I'm going to get the money."

"Do you think the good old padre will understand all these big words?" she asked Bolston, to whom she read the letter. "He's French, you know."

"Permit me to translate it to the French, Susie." And so this was done. And if ever Chorreras is to have a new church it will be the gift of Susie Noggins. Though the padre is old and may not live long enough to see it, he will at least have had the consoling satisfaction that his little friend did not forget to write him before she went indefinitely away.

While indulging in farewells, the lachrymal ducts being in eruption, both on the "Penelope" and at the waterfront below San Enrique, it may not be out of order to say that Captain Nicholas Mikleskoff, much dispirited, and using his handkerchief, as on a former occasion, sailed for the north with Ivan Petroffsky several days ago; and when they were arrived at Washington Ivan surrendered his commission as the navigator of Stephen Holt's dirigible, for this adventurous young man was no longer interested in aeronautics.

And what a distance for the Senora to be going! She had never been so far away from home as the "Penelope" would now take her, not even to Havana. Indeed, her Alcaldeship was never before abroad from her own native land, and she wept copiously on leaving; not so much, perhaps, on this account as for Don José, who was the best of husbands—even since the arrival of Doctor Richardson, who spent much time in the Senora's company—for, as I have said, she was a comely

creature, and the Doctor was about her own age, maybe a year or two older, a somewhat impressionable person withal, as he himself has already confessed in speaking to Bolston of Juanita's charms. Yet, both the Senora and the Doctor being married, I am sure nothing further need be said against any suspicions which the friendly relations existing between them might otherwise engender. Besides, the Doctor was entitled to a professorship of languages, and dearly loved the Spanish.

And the Englishman, too. He had reconsidered his first intention to return by cruiser, for it will be remembered Mrs. Holt was quite as positive in insisting that he should take passage on the "Penelope" as she had been that the war vessel should be sent back to New Orleans. If there was any other reason for Bolston's reconsideration the dear reader must discover it for him or her self; it is impossible for the writer to deal with every motive of each of the long array of characters portrayed in this volume.

Nor did Stephen desist from the indulgence of his passion; it may be that he could not do so, for that has been the fate of others. Even before the Mexican coast had disappeared toward the setting sun, he had renewed the siege of Juanita's heart. Had she loved him he might have borne himself in some degree of patience. In that case he could have devoted his time to the winning of his mother's consent. After that the senior Holt could have been managed, for wives know how to bring these things to pass.

Still, the great money master was not a compassionate man, nor easily persuaded. Above all, he could not be driven. All this is mere speculation, for Stephen's father knew nothing whatever about his son's infatuation. And there was this additional obstacle, of which the enamored youth was not then aware, although, like others of the "Penelope" party, he might have suspected it: Juanita loved the incomparable Briton. She

had never aspired to distinction of title, nor to a matrimonial alliance with glitter. Her parents were not immersed in greed. They were conspicuous only for those accomplishments with which nature and a creditable lineage had endowed them. It was enough if their daughter should wed some one within this circle of simplicity and respectability.

So that Stephen's chromatic speech in the compartment of his dirigible, when he supposed Ivan was steering toward the Grand Canyon, "away from the spying world;" his attempt to allure Juanita by picturing to her mind the fabulous wealth of his father, had found no response. To her it was as the tinkling of cymbals. Neither had her imagination nor her deeper emotions been stirred by the tale.

Thus isolated from every element of sympathy and encouragement, and failing to comprehend how any woman, especially one of humble station, could resist him—for, like Oakley of the pleasure yacht, he was innoculated with the virus of affluence—he conceived the idea that her affections must be engrossed by another, but by whom he could not decide. At once he was seized with a hatred for all masculine kind. Resolving upon the identification of his rival, if rival there was, he soon hit upon a line of action.

"Your lack of consideration for my feelings," said he to Juanita, soon after the "*Penelope*" had touched at Havana, "convinces me that you love another. Tell me frankly if this is true, and I will try to cease to care for you."

Here, indeed, was a tempting inducement; yet, Juanita was not to be decoyed into a confession which concerned not only herself but Ralph Bolston as well. Although she was unable to account for the Englishman's reserve and his studied disinclination to permit his feelings for her to become known, even to those who were very close to both of them, her confidence in him was now far greater than any timorous doubt she may have

had before concerning his sincerity. Moreover, she was in a deal of doubt in regard to Stephen's promise that he would try to cease to care for her. She resolved, therefore, to be done with him, at least as a supposed lover.

"I greatly regret my failure to make you understand that I am not lacking in consideration for your feelings," she replied. "Surely, you would not have me deceive you into the belief that I loved you when frankness compels me to say I do not. It is no fault of yours; I am willing to admit that it is all my own."

"Yet you have not told me until now that you do not love me," he replied in a tone of half pleading and half vexation.

"Because I hoped that would be unnecessary," she answered.

"Neither do you tell me that there is someone else," he said, his trembling voice betraying his rising anger.

"It would not help you if you knew—"

"But I will know," he exclaimed. "You cannot prevent it."

"I shall not try to prevent it," she replied. Then she rose from the seat beside him and moved toward the stairway leading from the upper deck.

Stephen followed, and as Juanita was about to descend the stairs he grasped her arm with a viselike grip. "I'll compel you to love me," he hissed between his set teeth; then, releasing his hold, he walked away.

The following morning Bolston, Juanita and Margaret were pacing the "Penelope's" deck, laughing and chatting in joyous mood. The Senora came from below with a wrap for her daughter, for the air was damp and chill. Bolston took the wrap and placed it about Juanita's shoulders. It required some time to adjust it. Stephen, who was walking at the further side of the deck with Martha Giddings, observed the Englishman's attentions. In his resentment, and being studiously alert for vindication of his theory in regard to Juanita's attitude toward him, he shot a vicious glance at the Englishman.

Just then Juanita dropped her handkerchief. It might have been carried overboard by the wind but for Bolston's agility. It is more than probable that Juanita's gratitude for this slight favor gave her the desired opportunity to speak to him in a confidential tone, and that they were in no great haste to join Margaret and the Senora, who were now walking away together. Even this would have gone unobserved, except by Stephen, who was now fully convinced that he had discovered the rival who was robbing him of his idol's affections.

Thereafter the hours hung heavily upon him, and his mind was filled with dark thoughts. He avoided his mother's guests, spending much of the time in his cabin. Finally, he persuaded himself that even ordinary good manners entitled Juanita to an apology for his rudeness.

Coming from his cabin one afternoon he saw his sister and the Englishman on deck. They were walking slowly, arm in arm, engaged in earnest conversation. Stephen was pleased. Why could not Bolston, now the *bête noire* of his existence, fall in love with Margaret, he thought to himself, leaving the black-eyed charmer to him? How might such a thing be brought about? While revolving this query in his mind Juanita appeared, more beautiful in Stephen's eyes than ever.

Since the scene on the deck, when, through consuming love and disappointment, he had allowed himself to become angry and lay a violent hand upon Juanita's arm, they had merely passed the time of day when they met. Not to resume their former friendly relations would be little less than brutal; he was reasoning coldly, of course, without regard for his own inclinations. Besides, he wondered if Juanita had seen Margaret and Bolston, now at the further end of the vessel, still arm in arm like two engaged lovers, as he wished to Heaven they were. Here was an opportunity that must not be missed.

It was a situation which afforded a ray of hope for a despairing and a desperate heart.

With a smile, not without a twinge of guilt in it, he approached Juanita, saying that she was "too beautiful to be left alone." Then in a repentant tone—"I've come to ask forgiveness."

"Oh, I forgave you at the time—long before your anger cooled," she replied with a laugh. "I would not allow that to disturb our friendship, Mr. Holt. Do be reasonable hereafter, for your own sake."

"Men are such monsters," he replied, moving so that when Juanita turned to face him she would see Bolston and Margaret. "Very few of them are worthy of a good woman's love. They are changeable and inconstant. I have never deceived you, dear, sweet Juanita. I have sworn to love you always, and my affection for you is so great I would hate myself to think that any other woman could ever come between us. If you only loved me like that, to me it would be worth an eternity of every other bliss. Even now, with only discouragement from you, I could not bring myself to think of the love of another."

Juanita paled. Her eyes, staring straight at Bolston and Margaret, who unlocked their arms as they approached, seemed to lose their powers, and her head swam as if the sea were tossed by a tempest. Thus far Stephen's wicked ruse had succeeded. While pleading his own cause in words of burning passion, by suggestion he had painted the Englishman in colors perfidious.

"Oh, it is nothing—man's constancy," remarked Juanita, petulantly, as she took Stephen's arm and walked with him to the starboard.

When they were seated in the shadow of a life boat swinging lazily from its davits, Stephen could scarcely repress his joy,

although he made pretense of being much cast down. Though he had fired her susceptible nature by the picture so artfully drawn of man's duplicity, while the living reality stood out before Juanita's very eyes, as now she did not doubt, his victory was far from being won. He knew that before another day Bolston would talk with Juanita; that she would listen and doubt, and, doubting, listen all the more, and that unless new and conclusive evidence to justify Juanita's suspicions were forthcoming, his rival would win her to himself again.

So it was that Stephen, after much futile endeavor to impress Juanita with her mistake in not reciprocating his feelings for her, retired to his cabin to formulate a further plan of attack upon the Englishman's integrity.

Time was short; the "Penelope" was nearing her destination. He must act quickly. Would Margaret assist him? he asked himself. Had he not carried Captain Mikleskoff away on her account?—for well he knew of his sister's ruse at Washington. Besides, considerate and adorable sister that she was, had not she come to his aid on other occasions when he was in distress? He would lay the matter before Margaret in its best light ere he slept that night? If she failed him, he would not sleep at all until he had devised a means to the unrighteous end in view.

"Margery, you dearest of sisters," he began, after beckoning her to follow him to a secluded part of the "Penelope" that evening, "I ought to tell you that, although the Captain is a fine fellow in many respects, he does not begin to reach up to Mr. Bolston's standard."

"And he is not in love with Miss Guerrero," said she, interrupting him and giving him a pat upon the cheek. "You fear that Mr. Bolston does love her, and you would have your sister take him for herself, so that you may win the Castilian beauty. You turned me to good account for yourself on the deck this afternoon, Stephen; yet I forgive you, although I fear Juanita

will never forgive me. What may I do further to assist you? Remember, you must not expect me to do anything that is discreditable."

"Not for the world, Margery," he exclaimed; "only make love to Mr. Bolston—in earnest of course. You can win him away from Juanita and secure a prize husband. Help me, Margery! I never needed your help as I need it now. And it will be on the square, too. All is fair in love and war."

"Except duplicity in love affairs, Stephen," she replied. "If Mr. Bolston loves her, surely you would not have your sister marry him, if she could."

"Oh, but Margery, dear," pleaded Stephen, "he will love you. He is a foreigner, and you are wealthy."

Margaret gave Stephen a searching look. She did not reply by saying that the question of international marriage, under conditions involving wide disparity in the matter of financial fortune, had already been of much concern to her. She did venture the remark, however, that there might be a vast difference between the intentions of Captain Mikleskoff and the viewpoint of Ralph Bolston.

"Mr. Bolston," said she, "if he loves Miss Guerrero, is not moved by sordid motives."

"All the more, then, would he meet your ideal view, Margery, as a suitable husband."

"The less likely, therefore, that he would abandon his ideal in the selection of a wife," she answered.

Stephen's attempt to enlist the aid of Margaret in his matrimonial project had failed. As usual, whenever he came face to face with disappointment, he displayed impatience.

"You are like all the rest of womankind," he exclaimed, "inconsiderate and unreasonable."

Without further parley, he abruptly left Margaret and went to his cabin. Here he revolved the situation in all its fluctuat-

ing phases. When he came to the breakfast table next morning he wore a look of weariness and anxiety.

It was not the Holt nature—the nature of the male Holts—to acknowledge defeat, nor to relinquish a selfish purpose. This fact had been demonstrated, too often perhaps, in the elaborate office rooms of Holt major at the top of the skyscraper, at the foot of the spiral stairway.

As a last desperate resort in the effort to possess himself of Juanita Guerrero, Stephen, after hours of mental turmoil in his cabin, conceived the idea that the one desire of his heart, now cankered with malignant hatred and unrequited love, might be attained if Juanita's apprehensions could be stimulated by some written evidence that Bolston was deceiving her. It must be such evidence, he reasoned, as would serve to convince her beyond Bolston's power to refute it. Spurred by this pernicious thought, he seized a pen and, after much hot-headed effort, produced the following:

Beloved Briton: Would that I had the power to tell you how greatly your absence is lamented in this solitude; yet how ardently burn my kindling thoughts of your early return. Thinking of you, I almost envy my sweet friend Enid, who, as I write, is in your place at the dining table, where you told me of your love, and I, for reasons that now appear so groundless, expressed my foolish doubts. Could you but know the present yearnings of my heart not even the great necessities of the state, which concern your mind too deeply, I fear, could long detain you. Yet I must haste. Don José is on board. He is leaving in another moment for the village and will put this in the post. I bless him and those who will carry this loving short letter to you from
San Enrique,

MARGARET.

Thursday morning.

"If this fails to convince Juanita," said Stephen to himself, having finished the mischievous missive, "my cause would seem

to be hopeless. But, by all the gods of Greece, I'll never quit until she is mine!"

In respect of time and methods Stephen was a ready reckoner and equally proficient in the art of adaptation. He was favored in his wickedness in that it would be difficult for an expert to distinguish his handwriting from that of Margaret's. There was no obstacle he could see now in the short-cut way he had determined upon to bring the fraudulent letter to Juanita's attention. His present impatience was due to the fact that he must wait until the light of day came again, only to be dimmed by the radiance of Juanita Guerrero's love-enthralling face.

The opportunity came when Stephen found Juanita amusing herself at the vessel's stern by tossing sea biscuits to the gulls. He joined her and suggested that he would catch one with a hook and line if she wished, but she protested, saying that it would be an act of cruelty.

"Besides, why should the innocent bird be deprived of its precious freedom?" she asked.

"Oh, they're no good anyway," he replied. Without giving her time to respond, he said he had something very important to say to her. When they were seated he drew the forged letter from his pocket, saying it had been found by a servant and handed to him.

"I have thought about it a great deal," he continued, "and have concluded it is my duty to apprise you of its contents. Then I must return it to Margaret, with the suggestion that her 'beloved Briton' should be more careful in regard to letters he receives from admiring ladies. If you will follow with your beautiful eyes, Juanita, I will read. . . . How careless of him!" remarked Stephen, nonchalantly, when he had finished. "I should have taken it to Margaret at once, I suppose,

but my interest in you, sweet one, prompted me otherwise. I will do so now, if you will excuse me for a few minutes."

Before going, ostensibly in search of Margaret, he had taken note of poor Juanita's agitation, pretending not to do so, it may be guessed. She made no reply, but sat rigid as a statue, her wide eyes fixed upon the great open sea. She was not thinking, as a much less interested person would have thought, about Stephen's concept of the proprieties. His supposed breach of duty toward his sister concerned her not. All she knew and felt was that she was miserably unhappy. When Stephen returned, the victim of his atrocious act had gone.

In her cabin Juanita threw herself upon the bed and wept. Her mind was not in a reasoning mood, else she had contrasted Ralph Bolston's manly bearing with the impulsiveness and recklessness of young Holt, and bided her time for the certain vindication of the prudent Englishman.

In this frame of mind, too, she naturally would not take into consideration her own temperament, that particular phase of it which yielded too readily to gloomy apprehensions in the heart's affairs. She could think only of the loss of the one and only man who had impressed his image upon her young white soul—he who had told her on the Tampico pier in no uncertain phrase that she was his first love; and had kissed her hand—there it was, the hand upon which the tears, in her extreme sorrow, were now raining, as if they would wash away the impress of his precious lips. *Ah, Dieu!* Could it be those very lips were for another?—that, alas! at this moment, he was sealing his vows of love for the blue-eyed Margaret? Unhappy Juanita!

"It is nothing, *madre mio*. Once in a great while a woman must weep, entirely without cause."

Yet the Senora, who, in the midst of her *siesta* in the adjoining cabin, had been awakened by her daughter's sobs, knew

that an unusual affliction had come to Juanita, but she did not press her for an explanation.

The one consolation now remaining to support the distracted girl was that no one, not even her devoted mother, was aware of her very great affection for him—none save Bolston and herself. Surely, now that all seemed to be at an end, he would not subject her to additional humiliation by allowing their attachment to become public property. Such was her sensitive pride.

For reasons which she herself could not fathom, Juanita entertained no animosity toward Margaret. And yet, she could not endure the thought that, being Mrs. Holt's guest, she and her mother must go to the millionaire's home on their arrival at the Capital. How much she regretted that they were not at the stone house on the hill again, where she might spend the remainder of her days in silent sorrow. From this dilemma she was soon relieved, being informed by the Senora that Mrs. Grey had insisted that they should partake of her hospitality, for a time at least, during their stay. Accordingly, it was arranged that Juanita and her mother should go to the home of the Greys on the arrival of the "Penelope."

Then she resolved that for the rest of the voyage she would remain in her cabin, permitting it to be understood she was indisposed, thus minimizing the embarrassments of a most awkward situation. In her present state of mind a meeting with Bolston must surely give rise to unpleasant complications and perhaps betray her solitary grief to others. All anxiety as to her health was removed when Doctor Richardson announced, after a professional call upon her, that it was only a slight disturbance of the digestive function. Even in these modern times few physicians are able, through preliminary diagnosis, to distinguish between stomach derangement and the emotional illnesses of the heart.

Although he did not betray his anxiety, the Englishman made frequent inquiries of the Senora concerning "the invalid," and on the morning of the day that brought the voyage of the "Penelope" to a close, finding a struggling and lonely little for-get-me-not in one of Mrs. Holt's window boxes, he sent it to Juanita with his card, upon which was written: "So very glad to learn your indisposition is not serious. It will be a delight to see you on deck again."

It was a message, coming from one of Bolston's temperament, that was not wholly devoid of sentiment. "And the flower," thought Juanita—"there is none in the box whose language denotes faithlessness." This unworthy thought she instantly repelled by pressing the little bloom to her lips. "I will love him always," she cried. Emerging now from the chaos of her earlier trepidation, she had begun to reason.

Shortly before the "Penelope" came to her anchorage in the harbor at the foot of the Capital city, Mrs. Holt's guests assembled on the forward deck and discussed plans for the immediate future. Juanita was the last to join the group. She was accorded a most generous reception, Bolston being among the first to greet her. She noted the sturdy, earnest manner that had been his dominant characteristic from the beginning of their acquaintance. Could it be that behind this manly exterior all was perfidy and dishonor? The answer to this thought might have been read in the guilty face of Stephen Holt when he came up to express his pleasure in seeing Juanita again. Still, her greeting was none the less cordial on account of Stephen's furtive glances, and she responded cordially when Margaret kissed her.

CHAPTER XXVII

A DOUBLE CARNATION

Once upon a time a very estimable man was called to the highest councils of his country. And there was great acclaim. He went forth to his duty, as God had given him the ability to see it and the strength to sustain it. But he was soon beset by tribulation. Contrive as he would, he seemed not to meet with popular approval, for there were those about him that were covetous, who secretly hoped to supplant him; therefore, they found many faults in him. And naught he did sufficed to please those around him, nor the fallible public. Finally, he had not a single virtue to his credit; he was all blackness. Then he died. There was excess of ceremony and pageantry at his funeral. His late detractors were there in numbers. They laid flowers upon his bier, having sprinkled them profusely with their tears. Said the orator at the grave: "Here lies all that is mortal of a good and great man." "Amen," responded the flower-bearers. And they did weep.

You, my dear readers, have known such men, have seen many such funerals. Mayhap you were at this one. If so, I trust your tears were genuine, not like those of the crocodile. Also, that this little parable may serve to assure the critic of the good intentions of the author hereof in pointing a moral if not adorning a tale. Not that the critic has any terrors for him; for already does he know, and he hereby freely con-

fesses it, that he is unworthy of the critic's acquaintance even, from a literary point of view. Neither will he ask the critic to give a definition of what really good literature is, no more than he would solicit his opinion of the best Burgundy or the most insinuating Madeira, without which, as I have been reliably informed, the good old gentlemen and eminent who wrote our federal constitution would have been unequal to the task.

And this reminds me of an incident in the life of an able and conscientious judge, who, having written a decision in an important case, laid it aside for awhile before promulgating it from the bench. Taking it up again, he read it over very carefully. At the end, as if he had been reviewing the opinion of a distinguished colleague, or listening to a profound argument at the bar, instead of reading a production of his own, he exclaimed: "What — fool wrote this opinion, I wonder?" Being at a dinner one evening with some friends, the judge partook of several bumpers of good Burgundy, with the usual result that it roused his mental faculties to the point of hopeless sleeplessness, by consequence of which he spent the night rewriting the opinion aforementioned. When he read it over a few days later, he was moved to flatter himself that, although it reversed his former views, giving the suit to the plaintiff instead of to the defendant, as in the first opinion, nothing so learned had ever before been conceived in the mind of a judge.

But this yarn may be off the same spool with that other one, of more recent origin, wherein my brother of "*The White Prophet*" is reputed to have boldly asserted that three out of four of the critic class are victims of subacute diodonitis, if any of you know what that is. This I neither affirm nor deny, for I have my own ailments.

Well, it was so in respect of the unfortunate hero of this

story. After years of effort to please his countrymen—to satisfy all his friends and convince his enemies of their error in prosecuting a backbiting campaign against him—like the very estimable man in the parable, he died; that is, he was supposed to be dead. Inasmuch as everyone believed he had been abducted, and no one, except it be Andy Akers, could have furnished any evidence upon which to found such a belief, nor to discredit it, so, also, did everyone now believe that Cornelius Twain was dead. Hence, there was universal sorrow, and it was genuine, for the most part, except only, perhaps, among the consolidators, who made such noisy display of their grief over his loss as to be suspected of hypocrisy.

Imagine, then, the astonishment of the few senators who were in their seats, on the convening of the body one morning not many days after the "Penelope's" interesting company arrived in Washington, when, almost doubting their own eyes, they saw Twain walk into the chamber and sit down at his desk!—not only the astonishment of senators but also the consternation of the consolidators in the reserved stalls, where they had been lounging during the daily sessions of the past eight months, in constant expectation that the "unfinished business" would be laid before the Senate by the presiding officer, and that, a tie vote being discovered, the Vice-President would exercise his constitutional right to decide, and, the decision being in favor of the second amendment, as they had no doubt it would be, the Senate would then proceed with further voting on the Purchase bill, which, according to their hope and reckoning, would surely be defeated.

The amazement was very great, indeed. Twain had met with some difficulty in convincing the doorkeeper of his identity, for there was a remarkable change from his former well-groomed appearance, and he had grown a prodigious beard which completely covered his strong chin and added many

years to his real age. But, when he spoke to the bewildered guardian of the sacred precincts, his familiar voice dispelled all doubt, and he was allowed to pass through the portal to the consecrated chamber. He was meagre of flesh, and his face was pale; yet there, still, were the finely-chiseled and resolute features, and his eyes, deeply sunken though they were, had not lost their keen, penetrating forcefulness.

The Senate rose as a body when he came in at the green baize door, whence the startled page had entered on that fearful night of Twain's disappearance. The members, in awe-stricken silence, remained standing as he passed slowly to his seat. Nothing like this had ever before taken place in the Senate. He paused in the middle aisle, bowed, first to the Altrocratic side, and then, with a still lower bow, to the Conservatives.

It was not until Baxter was at Twain's side, and, after warmly clasping his hand, had taken from the lapel of his coat a fragrant double carnation and handed it to him, that the occupants of the galleries realized what had happened; whereupon they indulged in a burst of thunderous applause. The Vice-President rapped with his gavel, and made the usual proclamation that the galleries would be cleared should the demonstrations be repeated. But everyone knew that nothing of the kind had ever been done, and that on this occasion it was less likely to happen than on any other that could be imagined. And, too, the Vice-President had no doubt that before the end of the day some speeches would be made that would empty the galleries automatically.

Soon a deep hush fell upon the scene. Strong men were now in tears; fair women wept with them. Baxter, with his carnation, had touched the hearts of the throng in the galleries and of senators as well; had stirred one of the exalted emotions of man.

Abou spoke more slow,
But cheerily still; and said, "I pray thee, then,
Write me as one who loves his fellowmen."
The angel wrote and vanished. The next night
It came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names whom love of God had blest,
And, lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest!

As I entered the Capitol building my Philosopher friend, who has already been introduced to the reader, was coming out. He had witnessed the unusual scene from an obscure corner of the public gallery, where he was wont to sit among the proletarian visitors. He despised maudlin sentiment, and on that account kept away from the funerals of distinguished statesmen. I knew by the cynical smile on his face that his mind was charged with a message it would be worth while waiting to hear.

"What fools these mortals be," said he when I greeted him and asked if Twain was really returned. "Yes, sir, he is in the chamber, and there is much senseless emotion astir about it. I have never doubted he would return in due time. Neither has the mirthful Mr. Akers, whose short period of imprisonment on a charge of which he is both guilty and innocent will now be used to identify him with the martyrs; while the gullible multitude will never know the exact truth concerning the whole gloomy business, for the scarlet press will go on insisting upon its abduction theory, even though the doctors, guided by the titular goddess of the Greeks, find the vagrant impediment that is pressing on the poor fellow's brain. What disturbs me is the outcome of the uncertain struggle that has been going on all these months between Twain's heroic spirit and the aforesaid impediment, and which of these is to be the final victor. That is what science is interested in knowing; yet, what a sad tragedy it is! I hope Athene is to prevail. But it is plain to be seen that the mongering consolidators would shed

no tears if the cerebral obstruction should succeed in doing its worst, so that they might go on, unhindered, in their mad endeavor for universal dominion by the process of monopoly. This thought makes me tremble for the fate of the Altrocratic party, which must, I fear, like all its political predecessors, fall under the baleful influence that knows naught by the potency of gold. Farewell, then, to altruism, whose fate, alas! is now no longer in the balance even, for behold the mighty power of predaceous greed, with its soulless, clang ing instruments of iron and steel, all aglow with blood, as it stands menacingly and dominant in every avenue of enterprise—the conquering spirit of a new kind of god, soon to be the only God that man will know, or fear, or love."

"All about Sen'ter Wane come back," cried a newsboy. The Philosopher waved him aside and bade him be off, but the urchin preferred to listen to my friend's prophetic declamation. When the Philosopher stopped to take a new breath the newsboy, turning irreverently upon his heel and moving away, exclaimed :

"Ah, wat's de use of ennyting?"

"Nothing," replied the Philosopher, looking away from the little fellow; "that is, nothing for empty minds, except to be willingly carried along on the hysterical human tide, only to be dashed to destruction on the rocks of error and ignorance. Such, alas! is the power of wealth, and yet, my friend, how weak the wealth of power!"

I have frequently wondered, since then, which of these is to achieve the greater influence among the heedless masses—the philosophy of my learned friend or the barbaric logic of the newsboy.

And what a red-letter day it was for those Capitol visitors who had the good fortune to be present. In the President's stall were some of the chief executive's family, together with

Bolston, Juanita, Captain Noggins and Susie, for by this time these were become great favorites at the White House. The Captain was using his big red handkerchief industriously; he knew "the feelin'." Little Susie had never been in such a solemn place before then; it was all very strange to her, and she looked appealingly at Juanita and Bolston, who sat near her, very close together.

As has been said, from the moment that Senator Packenham suddenly stopped talking and took his seat some eight months ago, the anxious leaders and disciples of consolidation had not been absent from the other reserved stalls during any session of the body. Nor were they expecting to see Twain, whom they supposed to be forever gone from his place in the Senate. It was no matter, so that he did not return against the Purchase bill vote. Such was their charity for distressed humankind; such, indeed, their respect for the institution of government and the dignity of the American Senate.

Twain was now the center of a happy group of statesmen, and, during the recess that was taken so that they might shake his hands and offer their congratulations, even the Vice-President came down from his place to do him honor. It was as if the senator had just returned after a world-journey filled with splendid triumphs. Of course no one questioned him concerning his strange absence, nor of the cause of it. Indeed, had anyone done so, it is doubtful if Twain himself could have given a correct answer; and a truthful answer would have created a real sensation. But, now that he was in his seat again, there was no immediate necessity for an explanation. Even the members of the Press Gallery—an assemblage of thorough gentlemen, be it said, such as it would be difficult to find at any other legislative center in the world—would not obtrude themselves unduly upon him, for by this time,

no doubt, they, the first of all, were aware of his unfortunate situation.

When the Senate reconvened, and all was gravely silent again, Burrill rose and addressed the chair. "Mr. President," said he, "on a former occasion I made some remarks about an unrecorded vote. If my words gave offense to any senator I now withdraw them. May I inquire if there is not some unfinished business to dispose of?"

The Vice-President opened a drawer in his great desk. He drew from it a long white sheet of paper, somewhat yellowed with age, and solemnly passed it to the clerk in front of him. The clerk, taking the sheet, turned, facing the Senate. He looked over the body for a moment. Then he sat down, laid the sheet before him on the long table, and picked up a pen-holder; it did not now elude his grasp, as on another occasion. Twain was standing in his place, and was formally recognized by the chair.

"Mr. Twain." (The clerk had resumed the calling of the roll on the second amendment.)

"No," answered Twain. It was like a voice from the tomb.

Then there was a rearrangement of pairs and some additional votes were cast on that particular and now historic roll call, for almost the entire membership was present.

"Senators," exclaimed the Vice-President, when the clerk gave him the corrected tally sheet, "on the vote on the amendment to the pending bill the ayes are forty-five, the noes are forty-six. The noes have it, and the amendment is lost."

A great sigh of relief went up from those on the floor of the chamber. It was echoed by the occupants of the galleries, and was followed by a whirlwind of applause. The Vice-President did not use his gavel now.

There were other amendments. A few were voted into the

bill; many were voted down. They were of small consequence.

At the end, Twain rose in his place. A buzz of subdued exclamations came from the galleries, whose occupants leaned forward to see him or to catch his words. Senators turned in their chairs that they might observe and hear him. Those having the privilege of the floor—the entire membership of the House seemed to be present—came closer, craning their necks, the better to see and to listen.

He held in his right hand a small package of typewritten sheets much soiled and worn. Baxter's carnation was in the buttonhole of his ragged and bewrinkled frock coat, for he had not been at his lodgings to dress for the occasion, coming, as he had, from no one knew where, nor did anyone ever know. A page placed a glass of water on his desk. By this time the murmurings of the onlookers had subsided. Everything was quiet; everyone expectant. The supposed victim of Andy Akers, Bill Giddings, Sam Ives and Eph Fox was there in the flesh; he was now speaking.

"Mr. President," he began in solemn voice and measured phrase, "I wish to apologize to the Senate for my prolonged absence. It appears to have been unavoidable. No man has ever learned the secret art of overcoming fate or controlling destiny. Before I proceed I send to the clerk's desk a proposed substitute for the pending bill. It had been my intention to offer it at an earlier date. Circumstances over which I had no control prevented. I offer it now, and will ask that it may be read. Afterward it may lie on the table. Other senators may wish to speak to it."

At this point the self-centered Halsey rose in his place. He asked if the proposed substitute was lengthy, and if so would not the senator agree that it should simply be printed

for the information of the Senate, thus avoiding consumption of time in its being read.

"Of course the senator will explain it in his speech," said Halsey, "and the substitute will be read before it is voted on. For one I shall be glad to hear the explanation."

And it was so ordered. Then Twain went on:

"My explanation of its provisions will be brief. There is no necessity for great elaboration. The proposed substitute is devoid of confusing phraseology. The genius of lawyers and courts will not be taxed to understand it. If I may say as much, there are no intricacies in it that will require expensive interpretation, none, I hope, that will give rise to doubts, such as have been so often raised in long litigation over similar questions. This ought to be pleasing to the opponents of the measure, those outside the Senate, who will not be impoverished by attorney's fees when they come to attack the law."

"The senator has no doubt about its constitutionality?" inquired Baxter, now wearing his legislative smile.

"None whatever," replied Twain. "It is simply an elaboration of a section of the Sherman law, which some officers of the Government have nullified by neglecting to execute it. This substitute directs the condemnation of the instrumentalities of monopoly, either in whole or in part, and authorizes the Government to take over the portion so condemned at a price to be ascertained by a board of appraisers equitably chosen, with an appeal by either party to the courts; the property to be operated by the Government, by lease or otherwise, pending the proceedings. Thus, the burden of proof will be upon the offending party, instead of upon the Government, which is the agent and servant of the innocent multitude. There will be no delays—no procrastination, no duplication of authority in the various departments. Direct responsibility will fall upon the President. He must declare the existence

of a given monopoly. There are many from which he will be able to choose. There is no alternative; therefore there will be no delay. This is not widespread government ownership, as it is generally understood; it will prevent government ownership, unless the combinations find some new method of escaping the law. They will try to find it, but they will fail."

Then Twain entered somewhat at length into the details of the Altrocratic program, closing his speech with this peroration, dispassionately delivered:

"Failing to regulate and control the hand of avarice, to which all enterprise has passed by slow processes, we here and now assert the right of the Government to condemn the instrumentalities of monopoly by due process of law—a God-given function of justice that can never be granted away—and to rejuvenate legitimate industry; paying a fair price for that which is taken; taking only those things which are an infliction upon domestic commerce, a hindrance to competitive industry and a menace to liberty. Herein, Mr. President, lies the remedy. We should not deceive ourselves longer. Congress may go on with its panaceas to the end of time, but unless it strikes deeply at the root of the disease there will come no relief. We may build canals, annex foreign countries, propose reciprocity, enact banking laws, fiddle with finance, elect senators by direct vote of the people, inaugurate the referendum, adopt recall, establish new courts or fly to the moon, legislatively, but, sir, until we dispel monopoly by absolutely destroying it, wherever necessary; until healthful competition is restored in the business world and tyranny in trade is overthrown, there will be no real progress. Mark the prediction! Once the statutory authority to resort to this expedient is understood and put into operation, monopoly itself will strike its colors of oppression. Already the forbidding cloud so long hanging over the destinies of the Republic is breaking.

Altruism, through the demand of an awakened populace, has entered the spirit of public affairs. The contending cohorts of greed will be allowed their pound of flesh; yet they will be compelled to take their destroying hands from the stifled throat of enterprise."

At no time had Twain ever appeared to be more lucid than now, nor had his words ever rung truer. What if the effort, in the end, should cost him his life? The individual loss were nothing; the preservation of the Republic everything.

After this the constitutional lawyers of the Senate, as the Vice-President had suspected they would do, talked the galleries to emptiness, except as to those who were interested in the final vote on the Purchase bill, which, when taken late that evening, showed five majority in its favor.

At his lodgings, to which he managed to drive alone in a closed cab, Twain gave orders that he was not to be disturbed by anyone; he was weary and needed rest. Nor did the trusty sentinel at his door disobey the command, not even to admit Bolston and the editor Grey, nor to apprise his master of repeated telephone calls from the Grey residence, where Enid, being advised of her lover's return, anxiously awaited his coming. But, alas! She did but wait, and sigh, and walk the floor through the lingering night, peering dazedly through the lattice of her windows as the dull daylight fell slowly into her appartment.

And when morning came—Cornelius Twain was gone!

Some indefinite word that he left with his faithful valet led the many friends who called there to believe he would soon return. Indeed, the public beguiled itself with this expectation, until an unauthorized press report asserted vaguely that the senator was seriously ill and could not be seen, and, later, that he had gone to a sanitarium for treatment. But these reports were wholly unfounded.

If you, my dear reader, can gain the confidence of Ralph Bolston, and if he shall tell you as he has told it to me, and, alas! as Enid Grey knows it—but, as I shall spare you the painful story just now, it were well that you should spare yourself, unless you are consumed by maudlin curiosity. Even then it were far better that the dolorous details should go untold.

CHAPTER XXVIII

MARTHA GIDDINGS

But long before the appalling truth was even suspected, certainly before it became known, except to those I have mentioned, there was great consternation among the consolidators.

Andy Akers was still enjoying himself in jail. He had grown corpulent upon merriment—that is, he had laughed himself to a condition of fatness.

“Have you seen Sam Ives or heard anything about his health these fine days?” This question he was sure to ask whenever his wife or Dick Bostwick came to his cell, which was frequently. “I hope you haven’t come to turn me loose,” said he to Bostwick, after it was known that Twain was arrived.

“No,” replied the Chief; “we shall need you in court before very long, I apprehend.”

Then Akers laughed so heartily that several buttons about his clothing gave away, and Eva had to “mend him again,” as she said to the turnkey. Even a morose man who is fleshy often meets with such accidents.

“Court!” shouted Akers, when he could breathe again from laughing. “I’d rather go there just now than to Heaven, but you don’t dare take me there, Bostwick.”

Midst all these happenings Martha Giddings bore herself with patient fortitude. She was at the home of the kindly Bostwick, waiting, hoping for the hour when she might again

feel the clasp of Asher Wells' arms and receive the thrilling impress of his lips. Did she wait in vain? Was her hope realized? We shall see.

Her father was still a patient at the rest cure. He seldom left the building, and then only to walk with Martha in the evening air. He had promised never to leave the premises until Bostwick gave him permission to do so.

By the time the legislature had convened at M—— the obedient and devoted Ives was on hand, of course, planning to defeat the railroad tax bill which the Altrocrats favored, and to assist the legislature in carrying out "the expressed wish of the people," who had nominated Sam Sloane at the primaries to succeed Cornelius Twain. Twain had not been a candidate under the primary law, for the reason that the period within which senatorial petitions could be filed, had expired while he was still in self exile. And Parsons, having withdrawn from the senatorial race in the interest of the Twain faction, had been nominated and afterward elected to the office of governor.

But Twain was now returned and had taken his seat in the Senate again; yet Sloane gave no sign of keeping his promise to withdraw. This was due to the insistence of Ives that if the tax bill became a law and Sloane did not go to the Senate, Conservative prestige in the state would suffer. Incidentally, Ives' own prestige might be impaired!

It was a situation filled with grave dangers. If relief was to arrive it would have to come quickly. Therefore it was that a local wag referred to the plight of the Conservatives as "the C. Q. D. cause;" the vessel was sinking! The application of this pithy witticism was appreciated not only at M——; it was manifest, also, in the elaborate offices of the Hon. Ephraim Fox, counsel for the Come Quick Danger railroad, where Eva Farnum had put her share of special vintage "out of sight."

Here it was that Fox was now dictating cipher messages to be flashed both ways on the corroded copper wires as they hummed their music in the frosty air. The messages going to the west were for Sam Ives; those going eastward were for Roberts, the man of composite, corporate wisdom, whose enigmatical references to Martha Gidding's important part in the abduction tragedy were now fully comprehended even by Mr. Fox.

Again, the Farnum had squandered her share of the swag that Ives took from the box in the upper right hand corner of the vault when Fox gave him the key. The conditions were dubious; they were shrouded in repellant gloom.

When the political tension at M—— had reached its highest point, and the Purchase bill had come out of conference in Washington, after weeks of effort on the part of some of the committee to load it with indefinite terms; after the House had accepted it as passed by the Senate and the Conservative President had reluctantly signed it; after the tax bill had become a law at M——, Fox went east to see Roberts.

"Things are tightening, Mr. Fox."

"I must admit they do not look good," was the sad reply.

"She is still with her father?"

"Yes, sir."

"What progress did she make in Mexico?"

"We cannot find out. Ives saw Giddings, but he will not talk."

"Unfortunate," replied Roberts. "Other influences are at work, I suppose. They have bottled him up, I fear. You must see her."

"It will be useless," replied Fox. "She has given her promise that her father will keep his own counsel. Of that I am sure. She will not break her word. Besides, she is on close terms with the Greys and that officious Britisher. They would

be apprised of any effort I might make. They are now waiting for something of the kind to happen."

"Has the man that is in jail got a wife or a daughter?" asked Roberts, now convinced that his original plan had failed.

"He has a wife," for by this time Fox was cognizant of Eva's new marital relations.

"You must reach her. Impress upon her that a light sentence for her husband, with a liberal consideration—"

"That would take him into court, the very thing that Giddings and his daughter are trying hard to avoid, and that others may not want. And the remarkable part of it is that Akers is clamoring to be put on trial."

"Then let it be known to Miss Giddings that her father's friend is going to plead guilty; that this may be avoided if Giddings will come out of the bottle."

"And we would then come out of the some hole that we went in at, or a darker one. If Giddings talks, that Englishman would prosecute Akers. Giddings would be a witness. You see?"

"Unfortunate," replied Roberts. "Have you any suggestions, Mr. Fox?"

"Only this—that something may be accomplished through Mrs. Akers. She is an indefinite quantity. She loves her new husband, as I am told; also money, as I know. She is in the city and is coming to see me this evening. I will let you know tomorrow what she recommends."

So Fox and Eva were soon together again.

"No champagne, Eva; I want you to keep a clear head."

"I know some others," she replied, "that are badly in need of it."

"Champagne?"

"Clear heads."

"Ah! Eva; you've lost none of your old time wit. Yet, you're not old."

"I've lost a lot of money, Eph. I'm broke."

"Here's a thousand. Don't squander it; you may need it. Times are hard. I may help you further if you are careful and succeed in keeping your husband out of court."

"You are an old dear, Eph. You always were good to me."

"I'm your friend, Eva. I should have married you; it's too late now. Besides, you love some one else, and he's in trouble."

"Yes, and I'm crazy to get him out of it. That's why I'm here to see you."

"What are his plans?"

"He has none. He's simply desperate. Says he's been abandoned. He's anxious to go to trial. I want to prevent it. You must help me to do it. He's hard to control, you know, and is very vindictive."

"Poor fellow! It's too utterly bad. Of course you know him better than anyone. I'm not acquainted with him; never saw him, not to my knowledge."

"Neither has Ives seen him, not to my knowledge. He dealt with Giddings, who don't come to see him. This makes Andy sore."

"That's the way of too many men; they go back on their friends."

"You won't go back on Andy—I mean on me—Eph, will you?"

"On you, Eva? Of course not."

"What can be done, Eph?"

"I want to help you, Eva. That's the only interest I have in it."

"Order a bottle, Eph, I'm all run down."

"All right, Eva. I'll order a small one."

"A small one looks so cheap, Eph. Get a large one for appearances' sake."

"I'm afraid you'll get wound up too tightly, as you did the last time."

"You may drink most of it, Eph, as you did then."

When the big bottle was almost empty and the flush of youth was in Eva's cheeks again, she continued:

"You haven't told me what can be done."

"Which does he like most—money or freedom?"

"Money above everything." The astute railroad lawyer probably suspected that Eva was now speaking more particularly for herself; but this was no time for casuistry.

"Does he say so?"

"Yes. I talked with him yesterday. I suggested a small sentence and big pay. I thought you might fix both. That senator, the poor fellow, is back again, and people don't care as much as they did."

"What did he say?"

"He said the C. Q. D. company would have a fine time getting money enough, with all its bonds and stocks thrown in, to buy him off."

"Did he say the C. Q. D. company?"

"Yes."

"A mere figure of speech, I suppose."

"He talked as if it wasn't doing right by him."

"People in trouble, Eva, always blame everybody."

"Order another, Eph; you look pale."

"Yes; my old affliction. I'll be obliged to take the waters some day, I reckon."

It was after midnight when they left the private room they were in. In a way it resembled the one just off Fox's office in St. Louis when he and Eva were together "the last time."

Later that morning, after a few hours of restless slumber, Fox saw Roberts at his office.

"He's an obdurate fellow, Mr. Roberts—revengeful, and is anxious for trial. He's sore at Giddings."

"And you've lost your power over Giddings."

"Ives has; I never had any, not directly."

"If he is taken to court, Mr. Fox, and there are any others besides Giddings who are likely to be wanted, they ought not to be here." Then after a considerable pause: "I regret to see that you are not looking well, Mr. Fox. Of course that hasn't any connection with the other matter."

"Certainly not; I'm all run down, Mr. Roberts, too much work. I'll be obliged to take the waters before long."

"As you have no personal interest in this thing, Mr. Fox, why not take them right away? There are some great springs in the interior of Nomansland. You cannot afford to run down; good men are scarce. Keep me advised about your health. Good day."

Roberts was now at the end of his prolific resources. Not since the days when, in behalf of the Guild, he sat on the lid of a certain arduous administration in Washington until he almost had nervous prostration, had he been so utterly dejected; for his fame was now in danger of depreciation.

Had Eph Fox been obliged to pay Roberts for the advice he gave him, he would have been at a loss to have guessed the size of the fee, although he too was a lawyer, and knew how to charge.

It must have been about this time that Arthur Grey and Ralph Bolston, at the latter's lodgings in Washington, met by appointment.

"I've hit upon a plan to remove a great burden from the mind of that poor suffering Giddings girl, and at the same time do a little stroke of politics," said Grey.

The editor's sympathetic nature made him always the champion of his troubled fellow creatures. His chief concern now was for Martha Giddings.

"You are aware," said he, "of the legislative situation at M——."

He then handed the Englishman a telegram received from Cy Shirley the evening before. It set forth that the Sloane forces were circulating a report to the effect that Governor Parsons was trying for the Senate.

"I expected as much," said Grey, laughingly.

"Parsons has turned traitor," exclaimed Bolston indignantly.

"No," replied the editor. "You don't know American politics. It is a ruse of the opposition to offset Sloane's recreancy in not withdrawing from the race as he promised; and you would be surprised at the number of intelligent men who will believe it—so many always ready to credit a falsehood."

"Another circular trick; I see," replied the astonished Englishman.

"Well, it's of the same order. But, my friend," continued Grey, "it is about time we began to throw a few bombshells ourselves. See what you think of this one." Taking a letter from his pocket the editor read:

"The time has come when I must speak. I can bear the burden no longer. It is the duty of those who are concerned in this Twain affair to help me—I mean those who inspired it. Moreover, it is my duty as a faithful friend of yours to advise you that my detention (for that is what it amounts to) is a part of a plan to get you and Fox; I shall not be surprised if they get both of you before this letter reaches its destination. Thus far they have considerably yielded to my appeal not to make public the real purpose of my visit here. Akers' preliminary hearing comes off in a few days. I am to be a witness. If this can be avoided my family's good name may be

saved. Your work to control the legislature—yours and Fox's—does not help matters. If you would let go I might be permitted to come home a free man. If you persist, the Akers hearing will make it bad for everybody."

"Do you smell something that reminds you of gunpowder?" remarked Grey with a good natured chuckle when he had finished reading, "or do you taste dynamite?"

"Both," exclaimed Bolston. "That is intended for the Honorable Samuel Ives, I presume."

"It is," replied the editor, "and it has been signed by the Honorable William Giddings, on condition that he be allowed his liberty, when Ives and Fox let go their hold upon the legislature, which is friendly to Twain, as we all know, and will reëlect him to the Senate, notwithstanding the fact that Sloane received all the votes cast at the primary. It will also remove a great cloud from Martha's mind."

"What will Ives do?" asked Bolston.

"Whatever Fox tells him to do."

"And Fox?" queried Bolston further.

"Fox will not fight back, Bolston. They will take their hands off the situation out there, have no fear. Sloane will withdraw within twenty-four hours after that letter reaches Ives. Keep your ear to the ground. You'll hear something fall."

After it fell—after Sloane withdrew in an eloquent interview calling public attention to the fact that he was a man of his word—there was another meeting between the editor and Bolston.

"Have you read of the serious illness of Eph Fox?" inquired the editor. "It is too bad," he continued in a commiserative tone. "I have long suspected Eph was suffering from the effects of a serious malady. Yet he will recover, I have

every reason to believe—when the probability of his incarceration has been dispelled. Listen."

Unfolding a copy of a newspaper devoted to the chronicling, in softened and approving phrase, of the movements and opinions of the beneficiaries of consolidation, he read a "special telegram," dated at the home of the Hon. Ephraim Fox, setting forth the startling information that the said Fox, "one of the leading constitutional lawyers of the country, the general counsel of the C. Q. D. Railroad company," had suddenly been stricken while attending to the duties of his office; that he had been removed in great haste to his palatial residence in the suburbs of St. Louis, where he was attended by the three most noted specialists of the city; that four other Napoleons of medical science had been summoned, arriving on special wings of steel.

After a solemn consultation "it was rumored," the dispatch said, that an operation, of a most delicate nature, would be necessary; that specially sterilized instruments and specially prepared anesthetics would be used as soon as a special corps of trained nurses arrived on a special train now speeding on its way at fabulous cost.

"Poor Fox!" exclaimed the editor, drying his eyes with a two-bit handkerchief. "Wonder if he will actually bleed, like others do, when those specially imported knives are used on him? Now, here is the nub of the tragi-comedy," continued Grey. "It is contained in a concluding paragraph marked 'later.' It reads: 'At 1:46½ this morning the distinguished patient was sleeping peacefully.' Remarkable!" exclaimed Grey. "I am at a loss to understand how a man with a conscience like Eph's can do such a thing. 'All is darkness about the magnificent house.' How inconsiderate of Old Sol!" cried the editor, wiping his glasses on the aforesaid handkerchief. "The sun should have remained up last night to furnish a

special light on an occasion of this kind. ‘It is now said an operation will not be required. It is reported the special physicians have decided the great lawyer is suffering from indigestion.’ That is bad,” sighed Grey. “I had it once, and it was special, too, but it didn’t affect the stock market. ‘It is now believed, though the special physicians refuse to talk, that the patient will be obliged to take the waters at Sprinkledorff, and it is said that special arrangements are being made for his departure on a special steamer now being specially fumigated for that purpose.’

“The C. Q. D. road will be obliged to issue several bales of watered stock and to increase its rates on account of all that special business,” remarked Grey, when he had finished reading the news report. “Yes, Fox will go to Sprinkledorff, and Ives too. They will remain away until after the unpleasant consequences of the abduction cease to threaten their liberty. Then Fox will return to plead the unconstitutionality of Twain’s Purchase law.”

Grey and Bolston then visited the sanitarium and advised Giddings that he was at liberty to go his way.

“Remember, Giddings,” said Bolston with a note of great positiveness in his voice, “that if your friend Ives returns to take a hand against the reëlection of Senator Twain, by heavens you will be put behind the bars if I can accomplish it. You owe your freedom to your devoted daughter, not to me.”

Giddings expressed his gratitude in a voice hoarse with genuine emotion, his eyes filled with tears. At this point Martha came into the room. Being advised of the happy turn that affairs had taken for her, she threw her arms about Grey’s neck and kissed his ruddy cheeks. Taking Bolston’s hands she thanked him.

“I cannot tell you how grateful I am to all who have helped

us in this terrible trial," she exclaimed, weeping with exultant joy.

Then she hastened away to tell Enid Grey of her gratitude. The next morning she and her father, released from a strange imprisonment, boarded the limited express for the west.

Did Asher Wells keep faith with Martha Giddings? Alas! he did not. He gave the shallow excuse that she remained away beyond a reasonable length of time; that her father had not been so seriously ill as to prevent her from returning earlier to her home. The truth was, after she went east with her father and Bostwick, Asher Wells fell in love with another beauty of B—. It was not long until poor Martha came to realize what had happened.

She did not weep; there were no tears that would assuage her grief or drown her unutterable sorrow. Her heart was broken. She deserves to be sainted.

CHAPTER XXIX

READJUSTMENT

In due course of time Bolston came to know of the real nature of Juanita's illness on board the "Penelope." How the discovery was made is not now a matter of very great importance. It may be that it was by means of something more than mere surmise on his part, for Juanita had had abundant opportunity to make explanation. He was a frequent visitor at the Greys while she and her mother were guests in that household. When they went for a fortnight's visit to the Mexican Embassy he found his way to this hospitable abode with equal regularity.

Juanita continued to find additional pretexts for not going to the Holts, except for an occasional duty call. This became a source of disturbance to Mrs. Holt and Margaret. They spoke to the Englishman about it, and wondered if they could have offended the Guerreros.

It was not many days thereafter that he met Stephen at the club. The young spendthrift was in company with a couple of roistering companions, and the three were in a hilarious mood, almost noisy. Calling him to one side, Bolston requested that Stephen accompany him to a private room on an upper floor, which he hesitated about doing. Being advised that the matter was strictly of a personal nature, one that it were best not to discuss in public, the millionaire's son sullenly followed

the Englishman up stairs. Stephen's autocratic spirit having been accelerated by a brace or more of highballs, he was far from a reasoning frame of mind. Indeed, he was unusually haughty.

"Why am I honored with this exhibition of your confidence, Mr. Bolston?" he asked in an ironical tone, when the two were within the room and the Englishman had securely locked the door.

"I wish to consult you in regard to a lost letter," was the reply. "In order that I may not go astray—being a foreigner—in a matter involving the very delicate and entirely proper relations existing at times between ladies and gentlemen, what course would you pursue, let me ask, if you should find a letter, filled with expressions of tenderness, supposedly written by—well your sister Margaret for instance—to a gentleman?"

"Damn you! I will not permit you to use my sister's name in this way," exclaimed Stephen, rising suddenly to his feet, his face lurid with excitement. He was Margaret's defender now!

"There is no occasion for agitation on your part, Stephen," said Bolston in a tone of kindness. "Calm yourself until I have finished. If you have not apologized to Miss Guerrero for your wicked act before this hour tomorrow, I shall be obliged to resort to measures which would be likely to disbar you from good society."

Bolston had risen, and as he spoke he advanced toward young Holt, not threateningly, yet in a way that left no room for doubt as to his determined purpose.

Stephen's artificial courage was now decidedly on the wane. Only a few moments ago he was writhing with assumed indignation; now, even when Bolston unlocked the door and passed out of the room, he could not find his tongue to make reply

to the Englishman's last remark. When he joined his bibulous comrades below stairs, his manner was so changed and his spirits were so arid as to require, as they declared, "two high emergencies for one."

The following evening Bolston called at the Mexican Embassy again. As he was taking his leave Juanita pressed a note into his hand, and in a voice not intended to be overheard, she asked him if it were possible for him to forgive her.

"I shall not admit," he answered with a low, mellow laugh, "that there is any reason for your request, or that you could do anything to make forgiveness necessary."

What woman could not worship a character like this!

At his lodgings he unfolded the note handed him by Juanita and read:

Dear Adorable Juanita: I am going away—far away—it matters not where, nor whether I ever return. I am writing this note to say farewell to the one I shall never cease to love, and to ask that she accept this humble apology for the great mistake I made in regard to a certain letter. It was wrong, very wrong; yet my love for you, grown desperate for want of recompense, is the explanation I have to make in asking your forgiveness.

If I see you never more, then forevermore farewell.

Disconsolately,

STEPHEN.

An evening reception at the Holt residence, soon after the Senora and Juanita came, with due apology for their failure not to have done so long before, brought together many distinguished devotees of society. The winter home of the Holts was a spacious structure, as can well be imagined. Its predominant feature was a great conservatory whose playing fountains and perfumed atmosphere fairly enthralled the senses of those who had the good fortune to wander among and admire its exotic inhabitants.

Bolston and Juanita had drifted together in that seemingly

aimless way that lovers only can explain, until they found themselves snugly seated under the sheltering branches of a wide-spreading palm in a retired corner at the further end of the enchanting tropical garden—quite alone, as once on the Tampico pier. Here, in the silence of their immediate surroundings, they were listening to the distant strains of the orchestra, which was rendering an old and familiar air with such melodious charm that the appreciative Briton, when the music had ceased, remarked that the composer must have been moved by an unusual yearning of the heart.

"A promise unredeemed, no doubt," replied Juanita.

"Or one anticipated," added Bolston. "In either case his passion must have been very great to have found such plaintive expression in his song."

There was a touching tenderness in his voice that gave his words a world of meaning; that thrilled Juanita's soul with sweet delight. Only once in this madrigal epoch of his life—when he kissed her hand and asked if now she believed—had the fire of love outran his habitual circumspection. While she paused for a fitting reply, she felt his strong arm encircling her supple waist. In sheer helplessness she was drawn close to his stalwart frame.

"Ah, Juanita," said he, "is there no promise that you would make were I to ask?"

"There is one promise that I have made myself," she replied. "I will never again doubt your constancy. I have been foolish, very foolish."

"That belongs to the past," he whispered, "and I hold myself to blame for it all. I have loved you from the moment of our first meeting, and should have told you so without equivocation ere this. I feel now that had I done so you would have been spared the pain resulting from my caution.

It is my nature to be so. It is you who must forgive me, if you will.

"That I would gladly do if there were any reason—"

"Then tell me," he interrupted, pressing her hand rapturously to his lips, "if there is any reason why you cannot love me."

"There is none," she answered, nestling closer in his strong embrace; "I have loved you always."

If then—could the sheltering palm only proclaim it; yet, why summon even this mute witness, when testimony of such circumstantial kind, so long accepted in vernal courts the world around, is so abundant and too positive to be overthrown? For it must be that at this sweet, auspicious moment the seal of true love was affixed to Juanita's anticipating lips.

This happy Mexican maid, the reigning queen of Ralph Bolston's heart, was quick to disclose the reason for her exhilaration when she and her mother were alone that night.

"*Ah, madre de mi alma,*" she exclaimed, caressing and kissing the Senora's cheeks. "It is really true! He loves me! We are engaged!" Happy Juanita. Fortunate Briton.

Strange, is it not, that Margaret Holt and Captain Mikleskoff, in a less sequestered part of the conservatory, almost at the same moment when Juanita was promising never again to doubt the constancy of the knightly Briton, were recounting recollections of their last interview on the "Penelope" at San Enrique? The Russian, since that event, had found much idle time in which to draw not a few encouraging conclusions from Margaret's words, "not now."

"With those words every moment ringing sweetly in my ears," said he, "I have been sustained by ecstatic hope."

"Please do not press me to make them more definite, Cap-

tain," she said, with what to him seemed an unsympathetic laugh.

"I could not think of doing so," he replied, "unless the definition removed my unhappiness completely, making me your slave, for no servitude would be too great if you but loved me."

"Only a friend, Captain. It will never be less than that; it cannot be more."

It is related that when Edward Gibbon, he of the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," was courting in Switzerland the most beautiful maid of Lausanne, he "ran around like a mad-man with a sword in his hand compelling the peasants to own that she was the most beautiful woman in the world." To be par excellence the beauty of Lausanne was, in the great historian's mind, to concede that there was a limit to the charms of the girl whom he subsequently jilted; yet, during his mad infatuation, he insisted that her title to superlative beauty was to be circumscribed by nothing less than the boundaries of the universe.

In his love for Margaret Holt, Page Bannister was far less demonstrative than was the immortal chronicler in declaring his passion for the Gallic enchantress. This was due, no doubt, to an entirely proper recognition of the exaltedness of the great office into which he was soon to be inducted, for it is quite impossible to imagine that one possessing the serious and contemplative mien that would serve to raise him to so great a height as he had now come to should find it within the range of his dignified station to engage in so common a thing as making love. Quite impossible, I repeat.

And it is quite probable the fair Margaret herself was loth to indulge any demonstration of affection which might give rise to the suspicion that her attachment was impelled by ulterior motives; for it is not beyond reason to assume there were

those among the smart set who would discredit the suggestion of its being a case of "love at first sight," or that Margaret was not stirred by a pardonable ambition to possess herself of a popular matrimonial prize.

Hence, also, the points of contrast in the lovemaking of the Briton who wrote of Roman injustice and the Briton who, through much tribulation, had sought to rescue a supposed victim of the industrial policy which many very good people believe has come to be the noxious growth of the newer Republic. The declaration of the one was that his heart's idol was "the most beautiful woman in the world;" of the other that the irresistible object of his adoration was "the most beautiful woman he had ever seen." The disparity in the two temperaments, however, is manifest in Gibbon's public avowal of his love; whereas, for reasons which are not entirely obvious, Ralph Bolston's slow surrender to Juanita's charms was enveloped in the profound secrecy that belongs to a delicate diplomatic question.

Well, this now memorable White House wedding was fixed for the delightful month of June, when all Washington is atremble with fragrant bloom, and so many sweethearts of the past winter, now joined in felicitous wedlock, come here to climb the Washington Monument, for of course the elevator is stopped; to visit Mount Vernon, where Martha Custis, that was, spent her second honeymoon; to walk admiringly with a feeling almost of holy awe through the President's house, the nuptial place of a devoted mother, where two famous brides and beautiful had taken their marital vows, Ah! it is the very Paradise of lovers.

And yet, I have never seen any of these happy, interesting couples, coming here, as they do, direct from the church, that did not know quite positively, indeed, they are always sure, of looking like old married folk. How unconcerned they appear

to be—how blasé, even with the rice in the folds of their garments—and all Washington recognizing them at a glance.

And, as they stroll aimlessly and light-heartedly about the city, with all the beautiful world before them, and only sweet memories behind them, they will pass through the great corridor of the Willington Hotel, whence Cornelius Twain disappeared from the loving gaze of poor Enid Grey.

Later, they will sit in the Senate gallery looking down upon the serious statesmen and refuse to believe it was here that Baxter's carnation evoked a flood of tears. And, if they will observe closely, they may see John Koppinger, somewhat older than when he last appeared in these pages, but a bachelor still.

Afterward, they will repair to the Treasury Department with their guide, who will point out the identical chair in which a famous man sat when he was a member of President Bannister's cabinet, and recommended a law for a central bank through which the Government could assume control of the country's finances, thus depriving the greedy money kings of the power to create panics. But the Master Monger was opposed to a bank of this character, and that is why the country hasn't got one.

Before leaving the great building, where so many millions are buried in the subterranean vaults, and, coming to a small aperture in the wall, here, if the lovers care to know him now, will be found Captain John Noggins, for Bolston took care to pension this noble old soul by having him appointed to a place as laborer, the best position that could be had for him, from which place, after many years, possibly he may be promoted to a messengership. In this life position he will earn a small salary on which he and Susie must manage to subsist, and it is not at all probable, in view of the high cost of living, that she will ever save up enough money to build a church at Chorreras for her good old friend the amiable padre.

And now, weary of sightseeing, the lovers will walk to their temporary bower of bliss in some fashionable hotel, passing on their way a very fat man with gray hair. He is standing at the street corner, with a small tin cup in his hand, and is still laughing. He will refuse to die so long as Sam Ives insists upon remaining alive. Near him a middle aged woman, with marks of beauty lingering, still, in her face, is turning out a sweet little melody from a wheezy hand organ. She deserves a better fate, as Enid Grey, remembering the railway accident, will tell you. The lovers may not know who the poor couple are, although their names are quite prominent in these pages.

Before leaving for their home, of course the bride and groom will visit Arlington Cemetery, and as they are strolling solemnly to the north of the old Lee place, commonly called a mansion, their attention will be attracted to a tall granite monument on which is this inscription: "Arthur Grey, Editor, Altruist and Philanthropist."

"But," cries the dear reader, who may have grown weary of these touching allusions, "you have not told us of the fate of President Bannister, nor for what his administration was most notable." Thank you kindly for the suggestion.

Well, Page Bannister, having declared he would not seek a second term, and meaning what he said, retired to his farm in the west. Here he is learning the language of nature, as it is spoken to him from the freshly turned soil. And the one enduring event of his administration with which he is more delighted than all others is really worth telling about. Soon after his inauguration three "Napoleons of finance," so called, came from New York to see the new chief executive. They were accompanied by the astute Roberts. No matter what their business was: it was enough if it were only a social call—so they said to the reporters. At any rate, it was not a matter

that concerned the public that brought them there; and that is why this volume should deal with the subject—in order that the real facts may be made known.

"By your permission, Mr. President," began Roberts, "let me say that we have called to discuss with you the very serious business conditions of the country. As you are aware, of course, financial circles are much disturbed; there is a feeling of ominous uncertainty, a lack of confidence—"

"In whom, sir?" interrupted the President, rather pointedly.

"There is apprehension, an atmosphere of distrust—unrest were better, perhaps," remarked one of the financiers, who appeared to feel that Roberts had not put the case in its best light. "Money is going into hiding, Mr. President; bankers are nervous; credits are contracting as never before. In truth, there is every indication of a panic. I regret to say it."

"And my clients here," added Roberts, "who are always watchful of the nation's welfare, have worked out a plan to prevent the impending crash. They need—indeed, they beg your assistance."

Here the consolidators' lawyer paused to give the President an opportunity to pledge his coöperation in forestalling the panic, for of course he would not refuse to lend aid in saving the "business interests" of the country from ruin, in these piping times of peace, too!

"You will pardon me, gentlemen, but I do not quite understand in what way I may be of service. You have described the business situation as you see it, but have not explained in regard to the remedy."

"In a few words, Mr. President," replied Roberts, "the First Mortgage Bank, finding itself in possession, unexpectedly, of course, of a controlling interest in the securities of the Southern Soot Company, has decided to foreclose upon the plant. If this is done the Soot Company will be obliged to suspend

operations, thousands of workingmen will be thrown out of employment, and the panic will be on. It will then be necessary to reorganize it in some fashion. Now, my clients, who represent the Northern Spike Company, can head off the dark and forbidding disaster by taking over the Soot property. But, should they do so, thus restoring confidence in the business world, they feel they ought not to be subjected to prosecution by the Government."

"What would happen if I did not approve of your plan?" inquired the President, his eyes flashing with indignation.

"The First Mortgage Bank, I fear, would foreclose, the Soot Company would be compelled to shut down, other big banks, becoming nervous, would contract their loans, and the little banks everywhere would take fright; some of them might see fit to suspend payments. Liquidation in all lines of business would necessarily follow. I almost shudder to think of the awful consequences, Mr. President."

Roberts was now almost in tears. He could not have been more frank, it will be observed, when he talked with Fox of the possible tragic consequences of Twain's abduction.

Then the President asked a very important question:

"Does not the Northern Spike Company control the First Mortgage Bank?"

"The relations of the two institutions are friendly," was Roberts' cautious reply.

"You are aware, of course, that should I give sanction to your scheme I would be liable to impeachment?" remarked the President, interrogatively.

"But Congress would not dare start such a thing, Mr. President; you are too popular with the people to admit of it," replied Roberts.

Touching a little black button on the door jamb, the President said:

"Gentlemen, please make yourselves comfortable for a few minutes. I will have the United States marshal come and take you to jail."

Roberts quailed, and his clients gave him a reproachful look. It was a look that he had never before seen in their hardened faces. Then, smiling encouragingly, as if to reassure them, he muttered in a hoarse whisper:

"What is the nature of the accusation against us, Mr. President?"

"Treason, sir!" shouted Bannister, striking his desk with his clenched fist.

"By whom will such a remarkable information be laid?"

There was now the suspicion of a sneer in Roberts' speech, for it was evident soft words would no longer avail him.

"By the President of the United States, sir," was the positive almost fierce reply.

After a long silence, during which Bannister returned and took his seat at the big mahogany desk, Roberts spoke, in apologetic tones, saying the President had not fully comprehended his meaning. He went further and said he was to blame, perhaps, for having failed to make himself understood.

"I am exceedingly sorry, Mr. President, that I should have been so indefinite, so dense even, and humbly apologize."

"The incident is closed, for the present. You and your clients are at liberty to go, but under parole, remember, effective only during good behavior."

The First Mortgage Bank did not foreclose.

The Soot works did not shut down.

There was no panic.

This, dear reader, was the most notable event in Bannister's administration. His gentleness, his taciturnity had marked him an easy prey for men of Roberts' stamp. But this was a reception the consolidators and their cunning lawyer were not

looking for when they went to the White House. It was the kind of reception, moreover, that might have put an end to former infractions of the law had it been resorted to earlier in the same earnest manner.

All of this is intended to explain and emphasize the immensity of space that exists between Action and Agitation, concerning which, already, too much may have been said in this history; albeit I set out, in the first place, to write a political novel, with malice toward none but with charity for all.

CHAPTER XXX

FINIS

One day, not long after Twain's reëlection to the Senate, Bolston received a letter from him. It was post-marked at Boston. His friends at M—— believed him to be in Washington or near by, resting from his cruel experience at the hands of desperate men in quest of ungenerous power and sordid gain. There was no explanation in the letter of his strange conduct in going away so suddenly after his triumph in securing the adoption of his substitute to the Purchase bill—only the request that his friend, the constant Briton, should come to him on an important matter which could not be explained in writing, and a confused statement in regard to "an annoying mental disturbance" which he hoped would soon pass away. He was at the Charles street house again, where, he said, he would await the arrival of the Englishman, whom he admonished against publicity.

We may never know of the solemn thoughts that accompanied Ralph Bolston on his dreary journey to Boston, nor of the depressing emotions which beset him on the way as he returned to the Capital. We have noted the feelings which prompted him on a former occasion, after he had been commissioned to find Twain and restore him to the woman who loved him; how he sought to deserve her confidence in gratifying the only aspiration of her life.

We may depend upon it, therefore, that he will be steadfast, none the less, in performing the part that he is now called upon to play.

Standing impatiently on the front stoop of the house, Twain awaited the coming of the Englishman.

"Come quickly," said he, when Bolston had arrived and was shaking his hand. "I have much to say to you, and there may be little time in which to say it."

They passed through the narrow dark hall where Bolston and Koppinger had stood staring at each other not so many months ago, and on up the creaking stairs to the front room with whose ancient furnishings and queer recesses the Englishman was already familiar.

"By this time, my dear friend," began Twain, throwing himself at full length upon the rickety bed, "you must have guessed the cause of my distemper. It cannot go on much longer. I have fought against it with all my energy, and at the very moment when I had reason to believe it would not return, and that once more I might go about my duties fearlessly and unhampered, the horrible spell took possession of me again. It may come even now, before I have told you—"

Here the poor fellow closed his eyes, clenching his fists and compressing his lips. After a few moments of spasmodic effort, as if he were contending with some strange demon of darkness, he rose from the bed, and, crossing the room to a little table on which rested a much-worn suit case, he opened it. Then, quite oblivious of Bolston's presence, he calmly gathered a few toilet articles from adjacent shelves, took some small pieces of wearing apparel from a dingy closet in the corner, and proceeded to pack them carefully in the suit case, as if preparing for a journey. The roving spirit was again upon him. When he had closed and locked the suit case, placing the key in his pocket, he turned and peered smilingly upon his

friend. The strange, bewildered look of a moment ago was now gone from his face, and he returned and stretched himself upon the bed again.

"A narrow escape, Bolston," said he, with a pathetic laugh. "But, as I was saying, this cannot go on much longer. I sent for you that I might explain, and to ask you—." Here his voice trembled and the tears gushed from his sunken eyes. "So that I might ask you—. But you, my friend, will understand. Tell her—that I love her—so deeply, so devotedly—yet I must not see her! I would not add to her pain and suffering, Bolston. That is why I did not go to her even before I came so unexpectedly to the Senate that day to finish my life's work there; to offer the substitute and tell them why it should be adopted. After that I promised myself, if the spell did not come back again, and when I was—as of old—in feeling and in appearance—but it was not to be, Bolston; it is never to be. Please tell her—for me—gently, tenderly."

Then he closed his eyes again, and seemed to sleep, yet fitfully. When night came he yawned languidly, and turned on his pillow. Soon he rose, lit the small oil lamp on the mantel, and, after preparing himself for bed, sat down near Bolston, of whose presence he had taken not the least notice since last addressing him. Nor did he seem to recognize him until late in the afternoon of the following day, when, having a lucid interval, he laid his hand upon the Englishman's shoulder and said:

"Gently, tenderly, my friend, as you would have me serve you if the case were reversed with us. Care for her as you have cared for me; be her friend. And now, do what you think best with me. Take me to some place, Bolston, where I may bide the near end of a life distraught by much effort to serve and please the clamoring, inconstant multitude. It was not for myself that I have made the struggle of the past few

years. I think you know that to be true. When she—Enid!—thank God I may yet speak her name—when she came into my existence, and Love grappled with debased Politics for possession of me—well, my good friend, I made the mistake of trying to serve both of them. As well might a soul essay the impossible task of dwelling simultaneously in Heaven and in Hell."

So that now the honest, faithful Englishman, after a hurried arrangement for the comfort of his suffering friend at a near by resort for neurasthenics, where he left him in the care of skilled attendants, took his way back to the Capital, now the unwilling bearer of another commission—one that a less resolute man than he might well have evaded; the high duty, indeed, of conveying a message to the loving, hopeful and trusting creature, whose birthstar had long since marked her for misfortune—a message from the one around whom all her anxieties and adoration were gathered.

And how painful a duty it was for the faithful Briton!

Still, the commission was executed, with what hesitation and suspense, yet with what fidelity, must be left to the imagination of the reader. I will not undertake to describe the feelings of the one who received the message, nor to dwell at length upon the fortitude with which she bore the sorrowful tidings, for words refuse a task so heavy.

Besides, all that I am permitted to recount of the pitiful scene is that Enid Grey, after a moment of solicitous indecision, such as a great shock like this might be expected to produce, seemed to be as if translated to another and higher sphere; her human part consumed with spiritual exaltation; her face lighting with a heavenly smile, like that of Thaïs among the White Ladies of the monastery in the desert.

"Bear up, brave heart," said she to Bolston, over whose

rugged cheeks the tears were now raining. "Only help me to soothe him! only help me!"

Which he did to the fullest; for, after the least loss of time, he brought her to the sanitarium, which nestled solemnly in the New England uplands, among stately oaks and graceful elms whose gnarled limbs and twining branches, clothed in their January coats of sleet and snow, whipped vainly at the shrieking winter winds as they raced eastward to drink from the warm currents of the blue ocean.

Here she remained, watching and praying at his bedside, unmindful of the heavy hours, the cheerless gray days, the black silent nights, that came and went in dull procession.

O, if he could but know of her presence, of her devotion, of her consuming desire that reason might return once more to the disordered brain; that even a momentary ray of the old light might speak to her out of the now turbulent eyes. Had ever there been a more sacred marriage altar than this? What instrument of man's awkward designing could put such nuptial ties asunder?

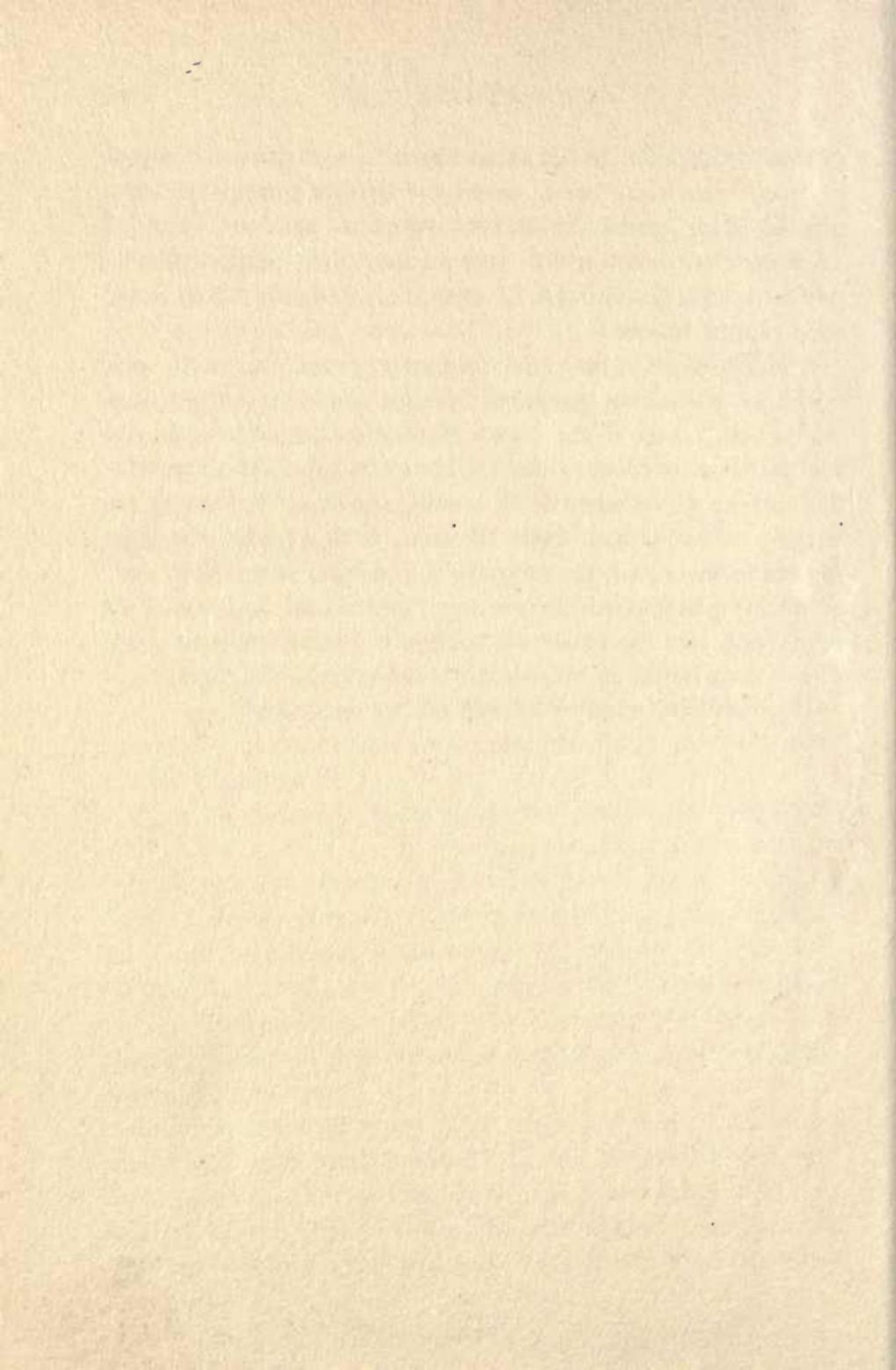
Thus she pictured the seemingly impossible; thus she hoped and prayed . . . until, one bright sunlit day that brought the spring's first robin, Enid Grey's heroic spirit seemed to forsake her—to pass all suddenly away, leaving her in physical turmoil—helpless, emotionless, even without the power to summon aid. Still, she felt no alarm—only a curious longing to fathom the strange feeling that had come over her. How long she remained thus entranced, thus deprived of her human senses, she knew not.

But this she does know, that after her cold, rigid frame was a thrill with mortal warmth again, the eyes of her husband—yea! for had not their souls been joined but now in holy wedlock by the Highest?—that his eyes opened dreamily upon her; that the old light was there once more; that he smiled

and took her hand in his ; that she bent over him and kissed his pale lips, while he smoothed the drooping ringlets at her temple. Nor could the Borean tempests, nor the bolts of Heaven, nor death itself have broken their long embrace. Only the mutual impulse of their united spirits could serve such rapture as this !

Then he rose, calmly and resolutely, from his couch, and, with her assistance, prepared himself for the journey that would bring them to the scenes of their earlier attachment ; to the parental roof tree where the ancestral portraits were waiting to look down upon their wooing again. All fear of returning torment had departed from him. Under the passionate influence of her endearing presence, her subtle, harmonizing power—Athene pouring “nectar and ambrosia, full of delight, into the breast of Achilles”—the intermittent shadows so long besetting his mentality had taken flight forever !

He was “vivified with a spark of her own soul.”



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